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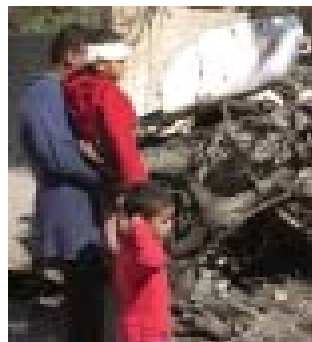
INSIDE



Cancelled Flights

Five U.S.-bound flights from Britain and France were canceled Saturday because of security concerns. The U.S. government said it had fresh indications of al-Qaida's continued interest in targeting commercial planes flying to the United States.

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US Fatalities

Three U.S. soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division were killed Saturday in a roadside bombing near the northern oil center of Kirkuk. Their deaths brought to 522 the number of American service members who have died since the Iraq war began March 20.

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VIRTUE OF THE WEEK

Idealism

"Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind... Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth."

— Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 521

See Page 13

Land compensation funds out

CDA, MPLA to release initial money to landowners

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER



EDITH ALEJANDRO

MISS TEEN ASPIRANTS

Miss Teen CNMI 2003 Remylyn Julene Guerrero, with crown, poses with this year's Saipan candidates, who were presented to the public Saturday. They are, from left, Chanel Cabrera, Divana Dela Cruz, Christal Leon Guerrero, Jerbeth De Leon, and Jocelyn Castro. Candidates from Rota and Tinian will be presented at a later date. **Story on Page 5.**

See LAND on Page 8

Most ex-SU students are now factory workers

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Former Saipan University students ended up as contract workers, working mostly now in garment factories after the government issued them temporary work authorizations or TWAs.

Left to themselves, the former students are barely making both ends

meet after they were asked to vacate an SU-assigned housing late last month.

Wang Rui, who has served as spokesperson for the group, said he and a friend share a small room in Chalan Kanoa.

He said he could survive because he borrowed \$200 from a former classmate who has found work ahead of him.

Wang, a former electrical firm manager in China, said that he is still

waiting for a prospective employer to call him in. He said, though, that his potential work is not exactly related to his field.

Wang said that as far he knows, most of the 84 former SU students have found work on island. "Most of them are working in garment factory," said Wang.

Wang said they have decided to stay on island pending the resolution of their

See MOST on Page 8

CDA to NMC: Clarify position on Gateway funding

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Development Authority wants Northern Marianas College to be single-minded on which agency it actually wants to deal with for its funding needs for the Pacific Gateway Project.

NMC is currently speaking with at least three local agencies—Marianas Public Lands Trust, NMI Retirement Fund, and the CDA—for interim financing for the project, while also seeking a direct loan with the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development.

"We want to know where they [NMC] are. If NMC wants MPLT or

NMIRF, go ahead. Don't negotiate with more people because it's going to cost government assets. It would require evaluation and this means spending for the project," said CDA board chairman Sixto Igisomar.

He said CDA "is willing to be the last resort."

See CDA on Page 8

Dead dolphin found to have fed on seagrass

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Are dolphins on CNMI's waters starving?

An autopsy conducted on a dolphin showed that the creature had fed on seagrass, indicating that it may have had difficulty in catching fish for its prey.

Dolphins are fast-moving aquatic mammals, the jaws of which contain as many as 250 conical teeth. Their teeth are adapted for ripping and tearing prey, not for chewing.

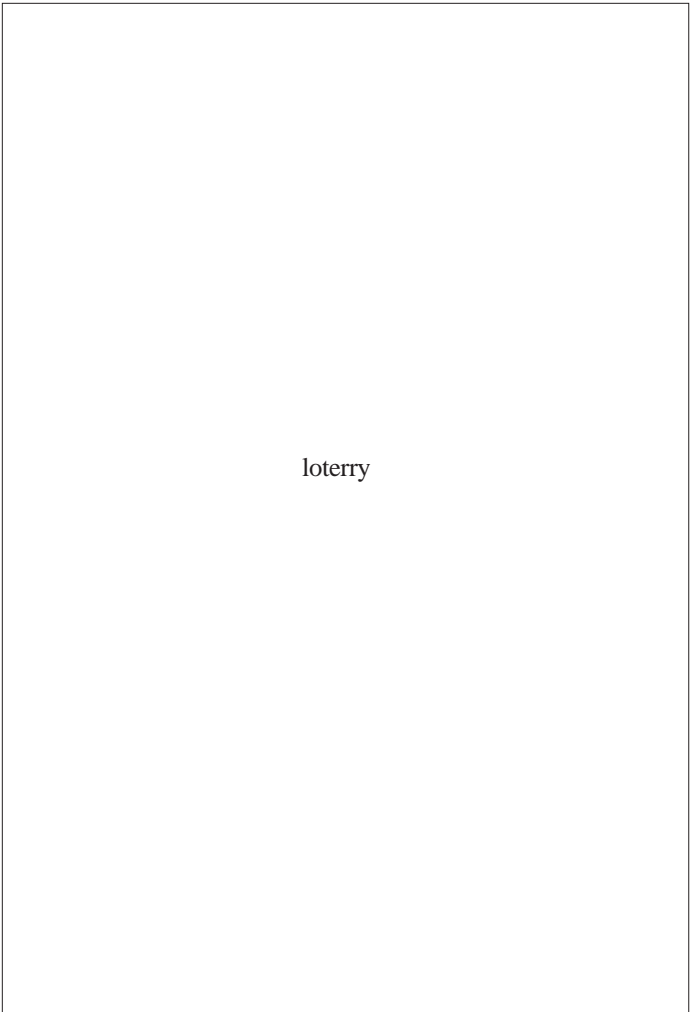
See DEAD on Page 8



Local

cosmos
+magenta/
blue

gardenia
+red



CDA: No findings yet on Palau Air

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Development Authority board of directors has begun its feasibility study on Palau Micronesia Air following the CNMI’s commitment to invest \$500,000 in the newly established airline.

CDA officials, who flew to Palau last week, said the agency has yet to make a full evaluation of the project.

CDA board chairman Sixto Igisomar, who convened a board meeting Saturday, said the issue is now being handled by a joint panel: the public finance committee headed by member Edwin Hofschneider and the economic development committee headed by Tom Quitugua.

“The board has not fully evaluated the project. We’ll wait for the recommendation by the joint committee,” said Igisomar.

Igisomar said the board, together with CDA executive director Mary Lou Ada, had a “very hectic” three-day visit to Palau as part of the project evaluation.

He said the CDA team met with Palau government leaders led by President Tommy Remengesau, as well as Palau Micronesia Air executives.

He said that CDA will forward its findings to the

Governor’s Office as soon as possible.

The CNMI Legislature earlier approved a joint resolution supporting the release of \$500,000 to PMA. In particular, the Legislature tasked CDA to borrow the money on behalf of the government from a regional bank, Pacific Islands Development Bank. The money would be used to buy 5,000 shares of capital stock from the airline firm.

Under the resolution, the CNMI government will shoulder the loan repayments.

The resolution also listed conditional provisions before the CDA can proceed with the borrowing:

■ CDA must first evaluate the propriety and prudence of borrowing the half-million dollars, and identify where the money to repay the loan would come from.

■ The funding source for the repayment of the loan must be approved by the Legislature through a bill.

■ The legal ownership of the stocks may be vested in the CNMI government or in any of its constituent entities.

■ The Palau government has to first put up the \$1 million it has committed to the new airline firm before the CNMI releases its investment share.

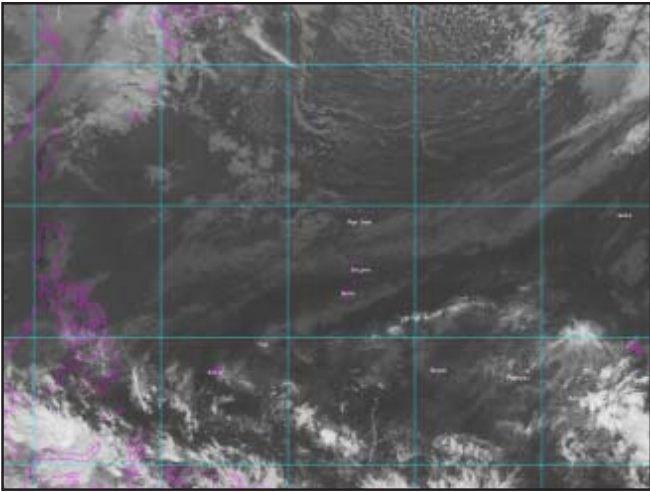
The CNMI government’s half-million-dollar equity investment in the new airline would entitle it to 10 percent of the company’s shares of common stocks and two seats on the firm’s Board of Directors.

Airline president Alan R. Seid said the money is needed to start the company, build the profit margin, and provide a strong reserve for the future.

Palau Micronesia Air is a corporation chartered under the laws of the Republic of Palau. It had issued 50,000 shares of stocks valued at \$100 per share, for a total initial capitalization of \$5 million.

The airline firm has been seeking subscribers for its stocks from among governments and individuals in the region. So far it has obtained commitments for \$1.52 million in initial investment from private sources in Palau and Japan; \$500,000 from the Yapese government; \$1 million commitment from the Palauan government as a portion of Palau’s pending loan from the International Commercial Bank of China (Taiwan); \$500,000 commitment from the Pohnpeian government; and \$600,000 reserved for subscription by people in the region.

WEATHER FORECAST



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 A.M., FEBRUARY 1, 2004
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A near-equatorial trough stretches from near 2n137e to the equator near 152e. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms associated with the trough are located south of Palau and Yap between the Equator and 5n from 130e to 144e. A weak trough of low pressure stretches from 7n167e to the equator near 170e. The trough combined with trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers in the southern Marshall Islands south of Majuro between the Equator and 6n from 167e to 180. A frontal system extends southwestward from near 25n157e to near 18n145e then continues as a shear line to near 14n130e. Extensive low clouds and widespread light showers are occurring along and up to 300 miles north of the boundary. Ahead of this boundary...an area of low clouds with light showers are occurring across the Mariana Islands.



SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 mph.



GUAM AND ROTA
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 mph.



PALAU
Partly cloudy.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.



POHNPEI
Partly cloudy.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.



YAP AND ULITHI
Partly cloudy.
Winds: Northeast 10-15 kt.



KOSRAE
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.



CHUUK
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.



MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 15-20 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
Auckland	Cloudy	76F (24C)	61F (16C)
Beijing	Rain	45F (7C)	25F (-4C)
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	66F (19C)	59F (15C)
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	83F (28C)	71F (22C)
London, England	Partly Cloudy	52F (11C)	46F (8C)
Los Angeles	Sunny	66F (19C)	44F (7C)
Manila	Partly Cloudy	86F (30C)	68F (20C)
Melbourne	Cloudy	69F (21C)	46F (8C)
Miami	Rain	80F (27C)	64F (18C)
New York City	Sunny	32F (0C)	24F (-4C)
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	42F (6C)	25F (-4C)
Paris	Partly Cloudy	49F (9C)	41F (5C)
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	53F (12C)	38F (3C)
Rome	Cloudy	54F (12C)	45F (7C)
Salem, Oregon	Showers	46F (8C)	38F (3C)
San Francisco	Cloudy	53F (12C)	48F (9C)
Seoul	Cloudy	43F (4C)	25F (-4C)
Tokyo, Japan	Partly Cloudy	42F (6C)	32F (0C)
Washington, DC	Sunny	34F (1C)	24F (-4C)

Saipan Community School’s honor roll in its 2nd quarter

Grade 6:
“A” Honor Roll – 3.50-3.99 GPA
Adeleyah Mojica
Micaela Demapan
Gyu Ri Kim

“B” Honor Roll – 3.00-3.49 GPA
Do Hee Kim
Kay Park
Lissane Loyola
Isabel Matsunaga
Sayaka Shimizu
Federico Fernandez

Grade 7:
“A” Honor Roll – 3.50-3.99 GPA
Champ Untalan
Min Sol Kim
Sung Hee An
Rezne Wong
Victoria Bellas

“B” Honor Roll – 3.00-3.49 GPA
J.D. Torres
Seong Bin Lee
Jason Quiblat
Min Joo Jung
Dencio Manglona

Grade 8:
Principal’s List – 4.00 GPA
O’Ronia Sikayun

“A” Honor Roll – 3.50-3.99 GPA
Soo Ji Ha
Soleana Demapan

“B” Honor Roll – 3.00-3.49 GPA
Wen Hui Ye
Vianka Johnson
Nam Hoon Kim
Luis Chung

2004 Miss Teen CNMI candidates presented

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Give way to the five Saipan candidates vying for the 2004 Miss Teen CNMI crown as they unveiled their plans, dreams, and hopes in joining this year's competition.

The five candidates were presented to the public Saturday at the Multi-Purpose Center, where they took center stage to talk about how they plan to help the CNMI's youths through various community-based activities.

This year's candidates are Divana Dela Cruz, Christal Leon Guerrero, Chanel Cabrera, Jerbeth De Leon, and Jocelyn Castro. Winners of the Miss Teen Tinian and Miss Teen Rota would be joining the Saipan candidates during the April 17, 2004 coronation night.

According to Miss Teen CNMI president Noby Crisostomo, Tinian and Rota would have their own Ms. Teen contests—a first—and winners of these contests would be sent to Saipan for the Miss Teen CNMI tilt.

With this year's theme "Bonitas de Islas Marianas," Crisostomo hopes to highlight during the pageant the Spanish influence on the local culture.

"This year's theme is Spanish so we can highlight that part of our culture and tradition that was imparted by the Spaniards. We also hope to bring here what we learned from the Miss Antillas beauty contest," Crisostomo explained.

Miss Teen CNMI 2003 Remeylyn Julene Guerrero had competed in the Miss Antillas International Beauty Pageant in Venezuela, where she won second place.

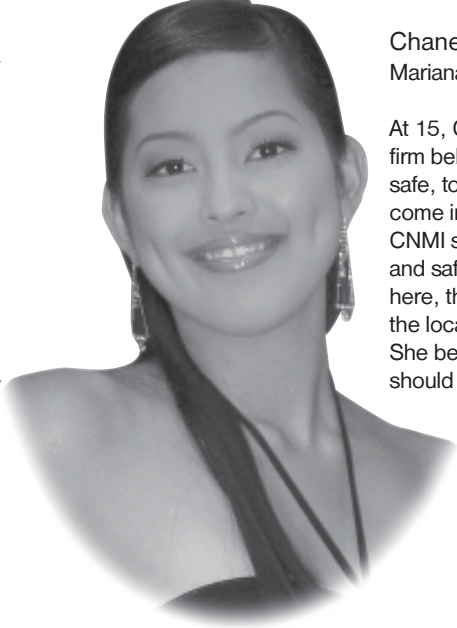
Also present during the media presentation Saturday was House Rep. Janet Maratita, who advised all contestants to face their fears and mistakes. Maratita also vowed to find ways on how to make Miss Teen CNMI candidates active in various community events.

Crisostomo said that after the coronation night on April 17, the 2004 Miss Teen-CNMI would fly to Venezuela the following month to compete in the 2004 Miss Antilles International.

He added that winners in the 2004 Miss Teen-CNMI should be physically and mentally prepared to represent the Northern Marianas in the international pageant.

Ms. Teen-CNMI—the local pageant search that capitalizes on the islands' attractive and spirited school-aged girls—was revived in 2002 after five years of dormancy.

Previous winners of the contest are Anita Jones Ayuyu, Cecilia Masga, Cecilia Taitano, Marian V. Pangelinan, and Gina Torres Duenas.



Chanel Cabrera, 15
Marianas High School

At 15, Chanel stands 5'9 and a firm believer that if the CNMI is safe, tourists would continue to come in. She believes that the CNMI should be kept beautiful and safe and once tourists are here, they can be introduced to the local culture and traditions. She believes that the CNMI should be exposed to the world.



Divana Dela Cruz, 16
Marianas High School

If she is crowned Miss Teen CNMI 2004, Divana hopes to organize a group that would help prevent suicide among the youth. Divana said flyers would be passed around to raise awareness in the community.



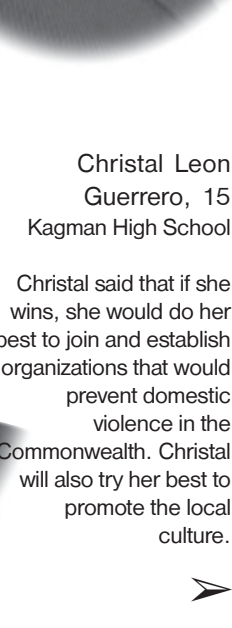
Jerbeth De Leon, 16
Marianas High School

Jerbeth is focusing on peer pressure as a problem she believes should be resolved to prevent teens from being involved in alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse. She said peer pressure comes in different forms and shapes and continues to haunt the younger generation.



Jocelyn Castro, 17
Kagman High School

Jocelyn joined the contest to build her self-esteem and self-confidence but if she wins, she hopes to work with students with disabilities and help families caring for people with disabilities. Jocelyn said it is hard for parents who have children with disabilities but with proper help, people with disabilities and their families would be more up to meeting these challenges head on.



Christal Leon Guerrero, 15
Kagman High School

Christal said that if she wins, she would do her best to join and establish organizations that would prevent domestic violence in the Commonwealth. Christal will also try her best to promote the local culture.



cars

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Coup by technicality

Late last year 3,448,747 of Venezuela's 24 million citizens turned out in just four days to sign petitions calling for a recall referendum on President Hugo Chavez. This extraordinary civic exercise, monitored by observers from the Organization of American States and the Carter Center, offered a democratic solution to years of political conflict in that important oil-producing nation—trouble that threatened to push Venezuela into dictatorship or civil war. Now Chavez, whose crackpot populism and authoritarian methods provoked the crisis, blatantly seeks to stop the vote, in violation of his commitment to both the OAS and his own constitution. His actions have already prompted a new wave of unrest across the country, including demonstrations in which at least seven people have been killed. Unless he can be restrained, Chavez may complete his destruction of one of Latin America's most enduring democracies.

Though the constitution, drawn up under Chavez's own administration, requires 20 percent of all voters to back a referendum, opposition groups collected 1 million signatures more than should have been needed for the recall vote. These signatures were rigorously audited by a nonpartisan civic group before being forwarded to the electoral commission. Yet, after delaying its response for weeks, the commission, dominated by Chavez's supporters, rejected 1.6 million of them, or nearly half the total. To do so, it invented requirements that didn't previously exist. Most notably, it threw out 876,000 signatures, each accompanied by a thumbprint, because someone other than the voter had entered registration details on the petition.

Chavez's functionaries subsequently announced that they would give about a million of those stricken from the list a chance to restore their names—but only if they appear in a limited number of registration centers during one two-day period. In practice, that poses a next-to-impossible logistical challenge to the opposition, even if there were no harassment from Chavez's police and civilian goon squads. But attempts by the foreign mediators to reverse this Kafkaesque coup have so far been unsuccessful.

Chavez, who has built a strong alliance with Cuba's Fidel Castro and imported thousands of Cuban personnel, appears eager for a domestic and international confrontation. Last weekend he called President Bush an "illegitimate" president, referred to him with a vulgar epithet and threatened to cut off oil supplies to the United States. Opposition leaders say that more than 300 people have been arrested in recent days, and that some have been tortured. Given the Bush administration's weak position in the region, hope for a peaceful or democratic solution rests mostly with Venezuela's Latin American neighbors, starting with Brazil. If Chavez continues to deny his people a democratic vote, leaders from those nations must be prepared to invoke the Democracy Charter of the OAS and threaten him with the isolation reserved for autocrats.

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Campaign goes on and on and on

By JAMES KLURFELD
Newsday

Are you ready for this: Eight months of a presidential campaign, starting now. Actually it started about two weeks ago.

I'm a self-described political junkie, and I'm not ready. Maybe we should all be glad we don't live in Ohio or Florida, two of the key battleground states. In New York, they aren't going to run a lot of ads for either John F. Kerry or George W. Bush because it's a lost cause for the Republicans. But we're still going to be inundated with politics for the rest of the year.

This is nuts. A president serves a four-year term and spends almost 25 percent of his time in an actual election contest? How does that make sense? It's not good for the country. Every decision is now viewed through the prism of the campaign.

Even decisions that are not blatantly political will seem blatantly political. As in: Bush is giving in too easily to the Islamic fundamentalists on the Iraq constitution because it's an election year. Or Kerry turned from free trader to a protectionist because it's an election year.

Alan Greenspan, the head of the Federal Reserve, did the nation a favor last week by admitting what everybody in Washington knows: The Social Security system needs to be modified if the Baby Boomers aren't going to break the bank. But will anybody talk honestly about it in the middle of the campaign? Of course not. But because of our extended campaign, that means for almost a full year the subject is taboo.

What's real and what's posturing? Governing comes to a halt, no matter what they tell you.

Sure, this is the messy part of a democracy. But does it have to last eight months? Other countries do it in a much more compact period of time. Our political calendar is way out of whack.

This never-ending campaign also is not good for the

candidates. It's a brutal process: living out of hotel rooms and grabbing meals on the run for months if you are the challenger. And, if you travel on Air Force One, it's still not the best use of your time.

Even for reporters, it's a weird existence. After spending almost two years on the road during the 1984 presidential campaign, I couldn't write a story unless I was on a bus or in a phone booth. And I found myself hopping the shuttle to New York and immediately back to Washington just to satisfy my craving to be flying from city to city again.

I know that politics goes into every decision a president makes from the day he takes office. And politics certainly dominates the agenda after the midterm elections. But an eight-month campaign?

Put the blame on the Democratic National Committee, which structured its primary season in a six-week window from the Iowa caucuses Jan. 19 to Super Tuesday March 2. And it worked. Kerry emerged in Iowa and then could not be stopped. And I doubt even if there were another six weeks or 12 weeks in the process, the result would be any different.

But that's not the point. Why not start the process in April and let it run through June if you want to have it compressed? Or spread the process out, so the voters have more time to evaluate a candidate and somebody actually has time to emerge after the front-runner is established.

Is this a better system than the one in which the party bosses picked a candidate in the back rooms of a convention? Probably. The old system gave us Warren G. Harding . . . and Franklin Roosevelt. The new system has given us . . . well, you know. It's more democratic and gets more people involved, although the percentage of the population actually voting in elections has declined recently.

We have no choice now but to endure the next eight months. But for 2008, somebody ought to fix what is clearly broken.

Klurfeld is editor of Newsday's editorial pages

By DR. MOHAMMAD ASHRAF

Ashraf is an International Resource Economist. He is solely responsible for the views expressed in this column and doesn't represent the views of Saipan Tribune. His email address is ashmdr@hotmail.com



Challenges to economic expansion

Q. What challenges do we face to further expand our economy?

A. Over the past four decades, the CNMI's economy has grown from millions of dollars to billions of dollars. Correspondingly, the size of government spending has grown from tens of millions of dollars to hundreds of millions of dollars. Desire and appetite for further growth still continues. However, one must not undermine challenges to further expansion.

Major challenges to additional growth are primarily related to availability of economic infrastructure. One of the latest issues that have come to the public's attention is the water supply. To set up a water distribution system an estimate of \$100 million has been tossed around. A corresponding sewer disposal system—the planners haven't thought about or just not made it public—would probably cost more than the supply system. In my view, water supply and disposal of wastewater in environmentally safe ways is a challenge to support the existing level of economic activity, let alone any further expansion.

The limited supply of the local workforce in relation to the overall needs of the economy puts a limit on how far we can go after expansion of economic activity, unless we are content with perpetual dependence on off-island supply. Given the situation of resident minority, serious incidences of social and cultural frictions may put heat on the leaders to continue such a course of growth. Effective mitigation of environmental stresses is another challenge. Though possible to mitigate negative effects of economic activity, it may not be cost-effective as we see, based on the water supply cost estimates. This area of concern will also impact further expansion of tourism sector.

My advice, first consummate the existing economic activity in accordance with social and environmental constraints. Be mindful to develop a plan detailing constraints and potentials of future growth in accordance with the wishes of the people.

Women

It was a young boy in my Social Studies class who asked the question, "Why aren't women mentioned more?", after finishing the section on the Golden Age of Athens.

The school textbook tries hard to focus on the role of women but the heavily patriarchal character of ancient civilization mentions only the occasional outstanding female personage like Hatshepsut, HIS majesty the Pharaoh Queen, who had to out-male males to keep the Egyptian crown on her head.

Last Saturday, our island's womenfolk celebrated our cultural diversity as part of the Commonwealth's month-long focus on Women's History, and the International Women's Day of the United Nations. They networked, exhibited their cultural gifts, tasted each others' culinary recipes and performed the art of their traditional heritage.

Women's empowerment gatherings had not always been around the Cocos, the empanada and the pie, and hardly on the fine points of cultural enlightenment and diversity. In 1910, women militantly marched on the streets in the United States to assert their right to vote, and claim their rightful place in the workplace.

While the right to vote would take another decade before it was ratified, a journey that took three scores, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) submitted in 1972 for ratification failed to muster the necessary support. Echoes of the Spartan definition of women as solely wives to fine warriors and mothers to healthy children resonated in the debate halls and eventually prevailed to block the ERA passage. For all its democratic pretensions and ideals, Athens was also a male-only affair.

Three decades ago, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that full-time working men averaged 75 percent more pay than full-time working women.

The cigarette ad, "You've come a long way, baby," has since embered into the ashtray of history, but given current statistics, and the plaint of highly qualified women, the glass ceiling to the executive quarters remain intact. In the seventies, China's Communist Party revived the old Chinese saying, "Women hold half of the sky."

My skeptical daughter, after seeing the same phrase plastered by her dad in numerous posters, asked: "But which half?"

Indeed, not too long ago, turbulent atmospheric occurrences in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans bore female names. Stereotypes of female erratic and unpredictable behavior remains a common fare in literature and cinema. The tradition of lunar aberration remains in the feminine domain.

Sadly, among our young, boys raising the clenched fist against girls continues to be a common sight in the classroom and the playground. The admirable T-shirts that declare domestic violence being NOT my tradition does not square with children's reports that parents in island cultures still beat up their children when they do not perform to standards. One mother tearfully confessed that her husband's only way of disciplining the children is to beat them up.

Which leads me to think that perhaps, we should also have an

By JAIME R. VERGARA

Vergara is a Social Studies 6th grade teacher at San Vicente Elementary School and writes a regular column for the Saipan Tribune.



International Men's Day, to confront the reduced island male image of the barbecued-ribs salivating, beer-gutted, couch potato descendant of the Western Pacific's ancient mariners.

But that's another month. This month, we focus on women. Research on human physiology has long established innate differences between the male and the female of the specie. The popularity of the analogy of Martians and Venusians is handy and partly helpful, but we are also discovering vast dissimilarities within the same gender canopy, which leads us to perhaps want to emulate the French tradition of always celebrating differences.

And as we all know, melting down differences into one blob does not produce vitality, energy and vigor; the mosaic of many colors does. Happily, in the Reformation tradition of Christendom, with its hallmark conviction of the priesthood of all believers, women clergy candidates now equal the number of males at seminaries. Ordination of women among the more Episcopalian, Othodox and Catholic traditions, and yes, the Southern Baptist Convention, lags behind but the discerning can see that this is not a matter of whether or not, only of when.

Religion as one of society's pillars can only add beneficial influence when it recognizes the diversity of its ranks and let in the fresh air of new social arrangements breeze through the stale air of its ancient halls.

Imagining the reformation that needs to take place in the veiled shadows of the Islamic world alone reveals that the challenge is formidable.

Women claiming their rightful place in every nook and cranny of our social structures can only benefit everyone. And as we all learned in the past century, rights are never granted from the top. They are claimed from the local, from the bottom up.

Let every women's gathering then be an empowerment gathering. Let the vitality, vigor and energy that is such a crucial ingredient in societal arrangements be a conscious and intentional focus of the traditional life-giving female domain. Be wives to your male partners and challenge them to be men. Be mothers to your children who will adopt healthy ways. But most importantly, let every woman be true to her bliss, and be human. So let me tweak the focus a bit: Happy History-making Women's Month!

Letters to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

A change for the better

The article written by Mr. Gonzalo Q. Santos entitled "Where were you" demonstrates how irresponsible the Liaison leadership is. I feel for Mr. Cabrera and every individual who in one way or another were treated the same. This was a deliberate disregard for human dignity.

One has to wonder if the reasoning behind all the activities happening in the Liaison Office is politically motivated. I am sure it's not. Maybe the motive is just a longing for power. The patients and escorts do not have to endure all these. They deserve better treatment.

Whether you're a Democrat, Republican, Covenant, or Independent, this should not be a determining factor for assistance and services at the liaison office. Political affiliation should not be even considered. Or is it? I might be wrong but it should not be a criteria or eligibility as to who gets better treatment. Every individual should be treated the same. I am pretty sure the Babauta administration and the leadership would not tolerate this kind of behavior for the simple fact that the Liaison Office actually belongs to the people of the CNMI and not the Liaison Officer. And I know that Governor Babauta and Lt. Governor Benavente and all our leaders in the House and Senate will not let this situation continue without a resolution. It's a recipe for disaster waiting to happen.

I strongly agree with Mr. Santos that the administration and the leadership should start asking questions and not issue a slap on the wrist. If we continue to ignore the issues and concerns of our patients and escorts, we're doing a disservice to them. Ladies and gentlemen, were talking here about the health and welfare of dignified individuals.

Let me just ask this question: What is the Honolulu Liaison Office's responsibility? Is it just to pick up and drop off patients and escort at the airport? If this is all they do, then we should abolish the Liaison Office. But I am pretty sure it is not. It is the responsibility of the Liaison Office to assist and support all CNMI citizens, especially the medical referrals. If the leadership in the Honolulu Liaison cannot or does not know how to manage and lead then I strongly recommend to our leadership that it is now time to replace the leadership of the office. Our people have suffered enough.

The administration and the leaders in the CNMI should not overlook this issue and concern. They should not hide this problem under the carpet anymore. This problem needs a solution and the

solution is to replace the current liaison officer with an individual who knows how to manage people and have the passion, motivation, enthusiasm, and dedication to lead the office.

And surely, Mr. Salas and Mr. Sakisat have all this qualities. These two gentlemen have what it takes to be effective leaders. As I said before, these two gentlemen have the leadership qualities we all cherish so much.

Lastly, I just want to say to the present liaison leadership that you've done what you could. It is just too overwhelming for you and I believe it is time to step down and turn over the baton to someone who can deliver the services to our people. I sincerely believe Mr. Salas or Mr. Sakisat is the right candidate for this job. I hope the administration and the leadership will give this recommendation a bipartisan consideration. Give Mr. Salas and Mr. Sakisat the opportunity to deliver the services our people have long waited. Aloha, Adios and Si Yuus Maase.

Jack DelaCruz

Lakewood, Washington

Opening thy mouth and placing foot in it

Ruth Tighe's recent column in the media included some very interesting comments about my criticism of Superior Court Judge Kenneth Govendo, which she described as "gratuitous." The following is a gratuitous response to Ruth Tighe's comments that I am certain will place in the proper perspective the issues surrounding her, Judge Govendo, and myself.

Tighe mentioned that "people who know and respect Judge Govendo appreciate his outspoken honesty, his championship of worthy causes." My question to Ruth Tighe is, "Who are these people that possess the same sentiments about Judge Govendo other than you? Making a blanket statement like that in a column is not only 'unconvincing,' but rather ridiculous, simply because there are no names to substantiate the assertion.

Apparently Ruth Tighe has appointed herself to be the "Environmental Protection Agency" for the CNMI. The last time I checked, the only people who can produce laws legitimately regarding the environment for the Northern Marianas are the individuals who the island community has voted for as lawmakers in the CNMI legislature. If Ruth Tighe feels as strongly about the environment as she purports in her columns, then perhaps she should contemplate running for office and being at the forefront in terms of creating laws to prevent some of the environmental issues she has discussed in her columns involving the garment industry.

It is absolutely fascinating and utterly contradictory that Tighe states publicly that I don't command much of a readership these days; and yet she apparently has taken the time to read what I have written and submitted to the media. The other two points that I would like to make are, "Has Tighe done a survey of the 75,000-plus residents in the CNMI to ascertain how many are or are not reading what I have been submitting to the media? And second, since when has Ruth Tighe been appointed to speak on behalf of the entire island community regarding who is taking the time and energy to sit down and read what my perspectives are regarding issues involving the world, NMC, the CNMI government, and judges who place themselves in a precarious position by violating judicial canons established for the judiciary? I strongly suggest that Ruth Tighe refrain from absurd statements like "Camacho isn't commanding much of a readership these days" unless she enjoys having a refutation that will be nothing short of lambasting her with rationale that is sensible as opposed to a reaction that she made that is laden with emotion and clearly without much reason and/or merit.

If Ruth Tighe wishes, or hopes to gain respect and establish recognition from people who write about issues that are published by the media in the CNMI, then she needs to think first and refrain from criticizing other writers with emotion in lieu of reason. Otherwise, people like me who communicate frequently vis-à-vis the "written word" and vehemently abhor emotional and personal reactions that are without substantive reasoning in writing will have no other recourse than to think that she is one of those individuals in a category indicative of "opening their mouths and placing a foot in it."

Dr. Jesus Camacho

Delano, California

Hawaii's Lingle to push for more Compact impact aid

HONOLULU, Hawaii (AP)—While Hawaii didn't get as much money as it wanted from the federal government to provide services for Micronesian and Marshallese immigrants, that won't deter the state from continuing to push for more aid, Gov. Linda Lingle says.

"In politics, we deal with it all the time—you don't get everything you want all the time," Lingle said. "But you need to be going in the right direction, and the agreement certainly was going in the right direction from my point of view."

Lingle was speaking of the federal government's allocation of \$30 million to be divided among Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands to provide social services for Micronesian and Marshallese immigrants who arrive on their shores under the Compacts of Free Association.

The compacts—which allow Micronesians and Marshallese to freely

come to the United States and its territories—were first negotiated in 1986 and renewed last month by the Bush administration. They recognize the island nations' independence and set forth a financial and tactical relationship between their governments and the U.S. government.

Upon renewal, the compacts were amended to include \$30 million for Hawaii and the other territories, which have long lobbied the U.S. government to help foot the bill for providing education, health and other services for immigrants.

Guam received the highest share of the funds, \$14.2 million, based on the number of immigrants who live there. Hawaii received \$10.5 million.

The distribution formula caused a rift between the U.S. Department of the Interior, which oversees Insular Affairs, and Hawaii's congressional delegation, which led to the cancellation of a planned ceremony last week in

Honolulu to announce the grants.

Lingle agreed that \$10.5 million won't cover the costs of providing for immigrants, but it still is more than Hawaii has received in the past.

"I don't think anybody felt they got enough," Lingle said at a news conference last week, flanked by Northern Marianas Gov. Juan Babauta and American Samoa Gov. Togiola Tulafono.

"As the congressional delegation stated, they will be working hard to get additional funding in the future," she said. "But it was more than we were getting previously by a substantial amount, so it's progress in the right direction."

In Hawaii, officials say the state spent about \$32 million in 2002 providing services for a population of about 7,000 Marshallese, and a slightly smaller number of Micronesians.

The state received about \$3 million for fiscal year 2003 in so-called compact-impact aid.

CDA

From Page 1

In a meeting Saturday, the CDA board instructed CDA executive director Mary Lou Ada to contact NMC on the issue.

Going into an interim financing for NMC, according to Igisomar, is not easy as it put assets at risk.

"The question there is, 'Whose assets are going to be in the hook? Is it the CNMI's or CDA's?' If it's CNMI, that needs legislative approval. And that takes time. If it's CDA, that would mean freezing up assets and that involves great risks. It's definitely no simple matter," he said.

He said it would help if NMC could decide early on as to its funding prospects with MPLT and NMIRF.

The involvement of MPLT and NMIRF in the financing equation may, however, be put in question. "There's a question of 'Can they actually assist?' Hopefully, they can make a quick decision whether they could do it. They

[MPLT, NMIRF, NMC] need to agree where they stand," said Igisomar.

On a personal level, he said he finds the Pacific Gateway "a good project," but he indicated that much more needs to be done for the project to take off. "It's a good project. Beautiful. The idea is good but as to the numbers...that's the question."

Igisomar said CDA will write to Gov. Juan N. Babauta informing him about the CDA's intent to work with NMC on the issue.

Babauta earlier asked the CDA board to help NMC secure interim financing to ensure that the Pacific Gateway gets started.

"CDA may be able to play a role by providing a guarantee of interim financing, while the Board of Regents negotiates with NMIRF and MPLT and while the board waits for a response to the [loan] application with USDA," said the governor in a Jan. 20, letter.

He said the interim financing would ensure that the project's opening—January 2005—would no longer be delayed.

other publications reporting dolphins feeding on seagrass. Trianni concludes that the dolphin was starving, could not pursue fish and thus chose to feed on seagrass," it added.

Co-authored by Kurt Kessler, Trianni's article also told of the frequent stranding of spinner dolphins in the Saipan lagoon during low tide, the DLNR said. The article reportedly explained three recent stranding of dolphins, which could have died had DFW staff not been able to herd the creatures to open sea.

The DLNR commended Trianni for his research work for the DFW, disclosing that the marine biologist has authored five articles published in

scientific journals in the past 18 months.

The agency disclosed that Trianni authored an article on reef fish abundance in CNMI's marine protected areas, which was published in Australia as part of the proceedings of the World Congress on Aquatic Protected Areas.

The DLNR explained that the article dealt with methods used to determine the increase in reef fish population, including that on the Managaha Marine Conservation Area.

"The article acknowledges the important contributions to the aquatic protected area reef fish surveys made by the DFW reef fish survey team composed of Jacinto Taman, Tony Flores, Rudy Pangelinan, Chris

LAND

From Page 1

evaluate the viability of Palau Micronesia Air.

The Palau-based airline has obtained an investment commitment of \$500,000 from the CNMI government.

To prevent any future delays in the release of funds, the board passed a resolution Saturday authorizing other CDA officials to sign off MPLA requests.

Meantime, MPLA commissioner Henry S. Hofschneider said Friday that the CDA's signature had authorized BoG to place the requested amount on MPLA's special account for land compensation.

He said that, of 62 land claimants who received MPLA compensation offers, 43 have accepted the offers, while nine have rejected them.

Those who have accepted the offers will begin to receive their payments this week.

Hofschneider said those who will get their claims need to present their Social Security number or a taxpayer's identification card. Concerned individuals can claim their compensation at the MPLA office, located at the ground floor of Sablan Building in Chalan Kanoa.

"They have to present SSS or Tax ID's when they come," said Hofschneider.

The Attorney General's Office earlier advised land claimants to report their total compensation to the government for tax purposes.

The AGO said recipients need to seek assistance from a tax professional to determine their estimated tax payment.

"It's very important that they

know about it now. So we're reminding them to seek the advise of a tax professional before they start spending their money...to avoid getting into financial trouble later," said Attorney General Pam Brown.

The AGO said that under the U.S. and CNMI laws, recipients are required to report such payments on their income tax returns or gross revenue tax return.

Tax payment differs depending whether the compensation is for land or for accumulated interest on the payments for the land or whether the recipient is a business or an individual.

The MPLA board earlier approved 75 folders for immediate land compensation after the signing and release of the \$40-million bond.

Of the total amount, only about \$27 million will be used for land compensation since \$11 million has been allotted for a pending prison project. The bond underwriter also deducted \$1.5 million for cost of the bond issuance.

The government is given 30 years to pay off the loan at an annual interest of 6.75 percent.

The first batch of claimants are landowners whose lands were acquired by the CNMI government for rights-of-way. The Land Compensation Act mandates the government to prioritize the payment for lands used for rights-of-way.

The next would be those whose lands were acquired for ponding basins. Lastly, the government will settle with landowners of wetlands and other claims. The MPLA has listed some 120 eligible land claimants in the CNMI.

The payments to landowners are based on the value of the properties at the time of taking by the Commonwealth.

MOST

From Page 1

court case against SU officials.

He said they were forced to vacate their housing in Susupe on Jan. 29 because its power connection had been cut. "We couldn't stay there because they cut the power supply," he said. "Now we're separated. We live far from each other."

The students earlier filed fraud charges against SU founder Park Soon Kyun, who allegedly promised them a state-of-the-art university and a study-and-work program in the CNMI.

Wang said they had thought of

returning to China but had reconsidered because "nothing" awaits them there. Besides, they said they have used up their savings just to come to the CNMI. "How can we go back when we have no money. We've used up our life savings," he said.

Wang said that while they want to study and get a degree in the CNMI—as they had planned—they have zero budget now to pursue it.

He said only two of them had been able to enroll at the Northern Marianas College.

The students earlier said that they incurred huge debts in China—some \$8,000 to \$15,000 each—to enroll at SU. They arrived on Saipan in fall 2003.

the lagoon," Trianni said.

In commending Trianni, the DLNR also disclosed the marine biologist's work on the sea cucumber fishery in Rota, which was published by the South Pacific Commission Beche-de-Mer Bulletin. The department also mentioned Trianni's article evaluating the sea cucumber resource on Saipan, which was published in the proceedings of the 9th International Coral Reef Symposium.

The DLNR said Trianni has also authored an article that focused on collected data in connection with the trochus season on Saipan, which was published in the South Pacific Commission's Trochus Bulletin.

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Business

Business

Interest rates buoy Wall Street investors

By MEG RICHARDS
AP BUSINESS WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—The feeble job growth in the government’s February employment report surprised economists and made the markets shudder, but the prospect of continued low interest rates softened the blow on Wall Street.

Stocks have surged as companies enjoy the increased borrowing power that comes

with lower rates, and the economy seems to be improving steadily. But the absence of new jobs has kept analysts from declaring a victory over the bear market. It’s also deterred the Federal Reserve from raising rates.

As a result, Friday’s news that the nation’s employers added just 21,000 positions last month, when economists were expecting an increase of 125,000, met some ambivalence

in the equity markets. Stocks sank at first, but rose to mostly unchanged levels as investors decided a longer period with lower rates didn’t sound so bad.

Still, some worried that the meager job growth could harm consumer confidence, or portend a drop in productivity. Sung Won Sohn, chief economist with Wells Fargo & Co. in Minneapolis, said investors should be cautious because there’s a rising risk of

an economic slowdown later this year.

“This is a terrible number,” Sohn said. “Obviously the relationship between economic growth and employment has broken down.”

In a recovery that is almost three years old, the economy should be producing 200,000 to 300,000 new jobs every month, Sohn and other economists say. In fact, the Fed has indicated it was unlikely to raise rates

without several consecutive months of that kind of growth.

Investors may like the fact that an interest rate rise is on the Fed’s back burner for now, Sohn said, but ultimately what drives the market is earnings growth, which depends on a strong economy. Without significant increases in jobs, consumer buying power and confidence will be hurt, and businesses will probably cut back on spending.

“Consumer spending counts

for two-thirds of the economy, and anemic jobs growth means poor consumer spending, and therefore a weak economy,” Sohn said. “I think this is not good news for the stock market.”

John Caldwell, chief investment strategist for McDonald Financial Group, took a similar view, saying, “Without jobs creation, the consensus view of 4.5 (percent) GDP growth this year is a pipe dream.”

Bush asserts his opponents will raise taxes

CRAWFORD, Texas (AP)—President Bush said Saturday the choice for voters this November is clear: lower taxes to stimulate growth or higher taxes that will stunt job creation. Bush defended his record on the economy and implied that Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry would raise taxes and hurt the economy.



Bush

conference in Crawford, Texas, with Mexican President Vicente Fox. Bush did not mention Kerry by name.

His comments came a day after a Labor Department report showed the economy added only 21,000 jobs in February, far below the 125,000 that economists had forecast. The government also downgraded job gains for January from 112,000 to 97,000.

Bush insisted, however, that the economy is rebounding.

“The economy is getting stronger. We’ve overcome a lot. We’ve been through a recession. We’ve been through an attack. We’ve been through corporate scandals. We’ve been through war. And our economy is getting stronger,” he said.

Bush said reducing regulation, changing rules on nuisance lawsuits and making his tax cuts permanent will strengthen the economy. “The question is who brings forth the best growth policies,” Bush said.

Kerry seized on the new labor numbers Friday as additional evidence of disappearing jobs during the Bush administration, saying the losses “rip the heart out of our economy.” More than 2.2 million payroll jobs have been lost since Bush took office—a figure Kerry has repeatedly

Raising taxes will make it harder for people to find work,” Bush said during a news

Buffett says Bush tax cuts favor wealthy

OMAHA, Neb. (AP)—Billionaire investor Warren Buffett accused the Bush administration Saturday of pursuing tax cuts that favor large corporations and wealthy individuals.

“If class warfare is being waged in America, my class is clearly winning,” Buffett said in Berkshire Hathaway Inc.’s annual report.

Except for 1983, the percentage of federal tax receipts from corporate income taxes last year was the lowest since data was first published in 1934, Buffett said.

“Tax breaks for corporations (and their investors, particularly large ones) were a major part of the administration’s 2002 and 2003 initiatives,” Buffett said.

Buffett said many large

corporations now pay nothing close to the stated federal tax rate of 35 percent.

In an April 2 speech, Pamela Olson, assistant secretary for tax policy at the U.S. Treasury, referred to “a certain midwestern oracle” when she said Buffett played the tax code “like a fiddle.”



Buffett

However, Buffett said in the report his investment company pays its taxes and is almost certainly among the country’s top 10 taxpayers. The company will pay \$3.3 billion in 2003 corporate income tax, he said.

raised on the campaign trail as proof that new leadership is needed in the White House.

Addressing economic problems of his own at the news conference, Fox stressed the importance of Mexico as a trading partner.

He said Mexico’s trade relationship with the United States is a two-way commercial street. “Mexico buys from the United States in volume that equals Germany, Spain, Italy, and France. All this creates employment,” said Fox.

cars unlimited

Stewart's defense team gambled and lost

By ERIN McCLAM
AP WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Facing a stock scandal that threatened to shatter Martha Stewart's carefully tended reputation and enormous fortune, her defense team made three high-stakes gambles: They let the case go to trial, kept Stewart off the witness stand and put on a defense that took less time than one of her syndicated cooking shows.

The perfectionist home-maker wound up with the most crushing loss possible—a guilty verdict on all counts, and a likely new home behind bars.

"She should get her money back from her lawyers," said Thomas Ajamie, a veteran Houston securities attorney. "How this even went to trial in the first place, I have no idea."

Stewart should have admitted from the beginning that she sold her ImClone Systems stock in 2001 based on a tip that ImClone CEO Sam Waksal was selling his shares, Ajamie said.

But Stewart made no mention of the tip in a Feb. 4, 2002, interview with investigators, and she said in a follow-up interview two months later that she had no memory of knowing in advance that Waksal was selling.

Legal experts said Stewart might have avoided prison if she had come clean then because the money at stake in the trade was so small. Stewart, who was briefly a billionaire after Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia went public in 1999, saved \$51,000 by selling a day ahead of a damaging government report about an ImClone drug.

"Had she admitted the mistake early on, she would have spent no time in prison," said Ajamie, who was careful to point out he was speaking in hindsight. "She's much worse off than had she tried to go in and just admit the mistake."

Her lawyers insisted Stewart was telling the truth when she said she did not recall receiving



Martha Stewart points to a calendar where she tracks her chores for April on the set in New York for her syndicated television show "Martha Stewart Living" in this March 28, 2002, file photo. AP

In Westport, shock over Stewart's verdict

WESTPORT, Conn. (AP)—Martha Stewart may have had tension with her neighbors in Westport, but even those who described prickly encounters with the domestic diva said they were not rooting for her to be thrown in jail.

Town Hall employees ran to the only TV in the building Friday and gasped with surprise when they heard the jury had found Stewart guilty, said First Selectwoman Diane Farrell.

"Anytime someone goes to jail, it's regrettable," said Farrell, who was betting on acquittal. "But it affirms that the system

seems to treat everyone fairly."

Stewart, 62, was convicted Friday of obstructing justice and lying to the government about the well-timed sale of stock she owned in ImClone Systems.

Westport businessman John Reznikoff said he thinks Stewart's celebrity made her a target.

"What I marvel at is the pleasure that people take at seeing rich and well-known people knocked off their pedestal," said Reznikoff, an antiques dealer. "If she was an average housewife and didn't have the financial means, she would have been acquitted."

Peter Bacanovic, federal prosecutors were insisting on prison time in any plea deal with Stewart, people close to the case have said.

At trial, Stewart lawyer

Stewart has a bad rap among the town's hair and makeup artists, said Danny Quaranca, a hair colorist at Artistex by Odette and Company in Westport.

"She's not the nicest person, but that's no reason to put her in jail," Quaranca said.

Stewart has a home and TV studio in Westport. She started a catering business here in 1972 on her way to becoming the country's most famous homemaking and decorating expert.

She also has homes in the Hamptons, Maine and Bedford, N.Y.

About two hours after the

verdict, a woman brought flowers wrapped in pink paper to Stewart's home. The woman, a Westport resident who did not want to be identified, left the flowers with a guard at Stewart's gate.

Nancy Sherter, who identified herself as a neighbor of Stewart's, said the verdict was outrageous.

"There's so much of that going on," she said, referring to corporate scandals that have rocked Wall Street. "They targeted her because she's a woman. I'm shocked. I thought she would be acquitted."

asked. The defense questioned him for just 20 minutes.

But Morvillo, who is considered among the best white-collar criminal defense attorneys in the country, kept Stewart off

the stand. He was betting that jurors would decide the defense had undermined the prosecution's case, which included nearly two dozen witnesses.

Instead, jurors convicted Stewart on all four counts—conspiracy, obstruction of justice and two counts of lying to investigators. Bacanovic was convicted of four counts, and cleared of a charge of falsifying a document.

One juror, Chappell Hartridge, said he would have liked to hear testimony from Stewart or Bacanovic. Without them, no witness was able to definitively support their contention that they had a prior arrangement to sell ImClone when it hit \$60.

"I would have liked to have heard from her," Hartridge said. "I would have loved to have heard the other side of the story."

Still, some outside lawyers said Morvillo made the best decision he could—and pointed out that any case that goes before a jury is unpredictable.

Putting Stewart or Bacanovic on the stand would have forced them to reconcile small inconsistencies in the stories they told investigators about the ImClone sale.

And Stewart would have had to answer for an event that jurors said held considerable sway with them—her alteration, four days before she was grilled by investigators, of a phone message from Bacanovic from the day she sold ImClone.

"Two things I would say are true for Morvillo: One, he knows his witness, and two, he knows his facts far better than we do," said Greg Markel, chair of litigation at New York law firm Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft.

Morvillo and his partners at the trial, John J. Tighe and John Cuti, scored a huge victory for Stewart on Feb. 27—persuading U.S. District Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum to drop a charge of securities fraud against Stewart.

Berkshire gains \$13.6B in net worth

OMAHA, Neb. (AP)—Berkshire Hathaway Inc. nearly doubled its net earnings last year to \$8.1 billion, but that was not enough to satisfy chairman Warren Buffett, the company said Saturday.

The company's 21 percent increase in book value failed to do better than the S&P 500, which grew by 28.7 percent. Buffett said he and vice chairman Charlie Munger will have to do better.

"Our shareholders can buy the S&P through an index fund at very low cost," Buffett said in his annual report.

"Unless we achieve gains in per-share intrinsic value in the future that outdo the S&P's

performance, Charlie and I will be adding nothing to what you can accomplish on your own."

Berkshire earned \$5,309 per share in the year ended Dec. 31, up 89 percent from the \$4.2 billion in net income in 2002, or \$2,795 per share.

Berkshire gained \$13.6 billion in net worth in 2003, Buffett said.

Berkshire owns businesses and stock in a wide variety of industries, including insurance, furniture, restaurants, candy and newspapers.

Insurance did well, with \$1.7 billion in pretax underwriting profit, Buffett said. But that gain was largely offset by low interest rates the company earned on its large cash holdings.

Buffett began Berkshire Hathaway as a struggling northern textile business in 1964 that earned \$175,586, or 15 cents a share. Over 39 years, its per-share book value has grown by an average of 22.2 percent, compared with the S&P 500's 10.4 percent, Buffett said.

Berkshire's growth has made it difficult to maintain the pace it once had, Buffett said.

"Overall, we are certain Berkshire's performance in the future will fall far short of what it has been in the past," Buffett said. "Nonetheless, Charlie and I remain hopeful that we can deliver results that are modestly above average."

Judge dismisses Pritzker family lawsuit

CHICAGO (AP)—A judge has dismissed a lawsuit by two young members of the wealthy Pritzker family who said they were cheated out of their inheritance, but the siblings will be allowed to amend the lawsuit and continue their case.

Liesel Pritzker, 19, and her brother, Matthew Pritzker, 21, say they were cheated out of more than \$1 billion under an agreement reached by their relatives to divide the family fortune. They have sought at least \$5 billion in punitive damages.

The family's major holdings include Hyatt Corp., with estimated 2001 revenues of \$2 billion, and the Marmon Group, which holds a number of

manufacturing and financial service companies and has assets estimated at \$7.2 billion.

Judge Patrick E. McGann took issue with several technical points in the lawsuit but gave the siblings permission to refile within 28 days, according to a decision issued Friday.

The young Pritzkers are suing their father, Robert Pritzker, and dozens of much older half-siblings and cousins.

Attorneys for the siblings said McGann's decision was encouraging because it gives them access to a confidential agreement on dividing the family fortune. The plaintiffs had previously been denied access to the document.

Robert Pritzker has

acknowledged transferring the assets, but contends his actions were proper. Lowell Sachnoff, an attorney for Robert Pritzker, said the ruling would "merely allow the case to move forward to determine the true facts."

Liesel Pritzker is an actress who performs under the name Liesel Matthews. She starred in the movie "The Little Princess" and played the president's daughter in "Air Force One." Matthew Pritzker is a sophomore at American University in Washington, D.C.

The siblings are among 12 surviving grandchildren of Abram Nicholas Pritzker, the financier, industrialist and family patriarch who died in 1986.

Nation

US sends team to make case vs Saddam

By CURT ANDERSON
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—A team of 50 Justice Department prosecutors, investigators and support staff is going to Iraq beginning this weekend to assemble war crimes cases against former President Saddam Hussein and others in his former regime, a senior official said Saturday.

The goal of the effort is to sift through thousands of pages of evidence and provide a roadmap for Iraqis to use when they eventually bring Saddam and others in his administration before war crimes tribunals. U.S. officials want the world to view the trials as an Iraqi process, not one run by Americans or other foreigners.

The U.S. team includes main Justice lawyers, FBI agents, U.S. Marshals Service members and others involved in the federal criminal justice system, said a senior Justice Department official.

“It’s one piece of the international effort to assist the Iraqis in putting together these proceedings,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. “They are learning

Iraqi defector blames CIA over weapons

WASHINGTON (AP)—Even though the CIA continually questioned the credibility of Iraqi defectors, the Bush administration largely used information from them to build a case for invading Iraq, says the man who led many of the defectors to the CIA.

Ahmad Chalabi, a member of the Iraqi Governing Council, said he is being unfairly attacked for the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and wants to testify in an open session of the Senate Intelligence Committee to make his case.

“Intelligence people who are supposed to do a better job for their country and their government did not do such a good job,” Chalabi said in an interview to be telecast Sunday on CBS’ “60 Minutes.” The program made his comments available to The Associated Press on Saturday.

As President Saddam Hussein’s government fell in Baghdad, the Pentagon flew Chalabi into the country from exile. He heads the Iraqi National Congress, an anti-Saddam exile group that the administration expected to be a major player in postwar Iraq.

In the CBS interview, Chalabi said he still expects illegal weapons to be found, despite the failure of two sets of inspectors and scores of thousands of U.S., British and other troops to find them.

how to put together a legitimate legal system.”

The Iraqi Governing Council has already set up tribunals consisting of three panels of five judges each, with nine other judges to serve on an appeals panel. The

timetable for a trial of Saddam, who was captured by U.S. forces on Dec. 14, is not yet clear, nor are the charges that might be brought.

The Justice Department team will be assigned to a new Regime Crimes Adviser’s Office run by the

Coalition Provisional Authority, which is headed by U.S. administrator L. Paul Bremer. The office will also include legal officials from other countries, including Great Britain, Spain and Poland, the Justice official said.

The White House, via national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, gave the Justice Department the lead on

the effort over other agencies, said Trent Duffy, a spokesman for President Bush.

The legal developments were first reported by The New York Times on its Internet site Saturday. The newspaper also quoted Salem Chalabi, an Iraqi lawyer in charge of the war crimes issue, as saying the trials might not begin until late this

year and that Saddam might not be the first defendant.

According to the newspaper, Chalabi said Iraqis want to avoid giving Saddam an international platform to try to justify his actions, as former Serbian leader and Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic has done in his war crimes trial at The Hague, Netherlands.

FHB

COSMOS
+BLUE/MAGENTA

NYC mayor: Gay couples merit equal rights

By TIMOTHY WILLIAMS
AP WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—The mayor of the nation's largest city says same-sex couples deserve the same rights in civil unions that straight couples enjoy in marriage, but he will continue to enforce New York state's ban on gay marriage.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg's statement, reversing his previous refusal to discuss his position on gay marriage, came the same week that dozens of same-sex couples seeking marriage

licenses were turned away by the City Clerk, and that state Attorney General Eliot Spitzer held that gay and lesbian marriages are prohibited by state law.

Bloomberg said in an interview that he goes "back-and-forth" on whether same-sex marriages should be allowed, but believes these couples deserve equality.

"Personally, I've always thought that civil unions should have exactly the same rights as marriage," Bloomberg said during the interview, to be broadcast Sunday on WPIX-TV. "I

don't think you should discriminate against anybody."

The mayor of New Paltz, north of New York City, performed 25 same-sex ceremonies a week ago. Mayor Jason West faces 19 criminal counts and could face jail time, but agreed to abide by a ruling that temporarily barred him from performing more same-sex marriages.

Still, West's decision didn't stop gay wedding ceremonies from taking

place in his village Saturday.

About two dozen same-sex couples gathered under a packed tent in a private parking lot on the village's Main Street to be married by local Unitarian ministers.

Among those getting married were ministers Pat Sullivan and Kay Greenleaf. Greenleaf also performed some of the ceremonies, which ended with the cheers of the two hundred spectators who turned out to witness the event.



Bloomberg

Unitarian ministers have been performing gay marriages across the country for years. Saturday's weddings were not legally sanctioned.

In New York City, the gay rights group Lambda Legal said it filed suit Friday in state court seeking the right for same-sex couples to become legally wed.

More than 3,600 same-sex marriages have been performed in San Francisco in the last three weeks, and hundreds of gay couples were granted wedding licenses in Portland, Ore., this week.



WATER TAXI CAPSIZES

A boat prepares to pull a capsized water taxi away from a Baltimore City Fire department vessel in Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Saturday, March 6, 2004. The water taxi carrying 24 people capsized Saturday, injuring at least two people, authorities said. Twelve people were rescued and ten were missing, said spokesman Kevin Cartwright. He said one child and one adult were in cardiac arrest.

AP

Kerry derides Bush's 'broken promises'

HOUSTON (AP)—Challenging President Bush on his home turf, John Kerry decried a "four-year trail of broken promises" that he said have left economic ruin and given free rein to corporate polluters.

"George Bush is a walking contradiction and a walking barrel of broken promises," the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate said Saturday, speaking to several hundred supporters at a community college.

Kerry was broadening his populist economic themes to challenge Bush on the environment and his handling of

conflicts abroad as, not far away, the president sought to cast himself as a world leader in a summit with Mexico's president, Vicente Fox.

The two rivals traced early outlines of a coming economic fight that is likely to be central to the campaign.

Speaking with reporters at his Crawford, Texas, ranch, 206 miles from Kerry's event in Houston, Bush defended his handling of the economy, saying "our economy is getting stronger" and suggesting that Kerry's proposals would raise taxes.

"Raising taxes will make it harder for people to find work," Bush said. Kerry has called for repealing the portions of Bush's tax cut that went to wealthy taxpayers, a move that Bush characterizes as a tax increase.

Kerry fired back quickly, using a San Antonio rally to contend Bush has "already departed from the truth."

"Once again President Bush has told one of those tall Texas tales," he said. "I think George Bush ought to leave the ranch and come out and talk to people who have lost their jobs."

After fourth child death, father charged

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—When Robert Morris' two children died unexpectedly on the same night nine years ago, authorities were certain that they had been smothered in their sleep. But no charges were filed, and as time passed, the city lost track of the young father police suspected might be the killer.

No one noticed when Morris fathered a third child with a different woman—not even when that infant, too, died suddenly during the night. A medical examiner said the baby was a victim of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

It took a fourth child's unexplained death and a phone call from a tipster before authorities realized they could have a serial killer on their hands. Morris was charged this week with murdering all four children.

Social workers said the case illustrates a weakness in the way many cities and states keep tabs on parents accused of abuse or neglect.

In Philadelphia, child welfare agencies generally track only the maltreated children over time, not their mothers and fathers—meaning that no red flag is raised if an allegedly abusive parent has another child.

The city's Child Fatality Review Team, which has examined the death of every young Philadelphian since 1994, has not made a practice of examining records to see if a parent has had other offspring die unexpectedly.

Similarly, the medical examiners who conducted the autopsies on Morris' third and fourth children were

unaware of the previous deaths.

"That kind of tracking just doesn't occur," said Health Department spokesman Jeff Moran.

Some of those practices are under review as a result of the Morris case.

Beginning immediately, the teams that review child deaths will also check to see whether their parents have had other children die young, officials said.

"In a small town, if something like that happened, everyone would know, and this institutional memory would get created, but in a big city it doesn't work like that," said Patricia West, a public health consultant who leads one of the teams. "We have to be that memory."



Morris



Woman to hang dead child's photo in cell

WICKLIFFE, Ky. (AP)—A woman whose dog mauled a 5-year-old boy to death was ordered to serve six months in jail with a picture of the child on her cell wall.

The 8-by-11-inch photograph of T.J. Adams was taken when he was hospitalized after the attack in June 2002.

Latasha Laster, 23, will serve the sentence around her work and college schedule and must perform 300 hours of community service, Judge Will Shadoan ruled Friday.

"She's done a very stupid thing," Shadoan said. "It cost a little boy his life."

Laster pleaded guilty to reckless homicide.

T.J. was visiting his grandmother next door to Laster's home in Wickliffe, in western Kentucky, when he was attacked. He died two days later.

Investigators said the 70-pound wolf hybrid was on a 20-foot chain, which allowed the dog to cross into the grandmother's property and attack the child.

Authorities shot the animal after the attack.

UCLA authorities probe cadaver thefts

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Two employees of the University of California, Los Angeles, have been placed on leave while authorities investigate whether they stole and sold body parts from cadavers donated to UCLA's medical school, the university said Saturday.

People familiar with the case told the Los Angeles Times that dozens of cadavers donated to the school were believed to have been sold.

Dr. J. Thomas Rosenthal, associate vice chancellor of the medical school, said school officials wouldn't say more until the University of California Police Department assures them their statements won't compromise the investigation.

The employees were not identified. In 1996, relatives of people whose bodies had been donated sued the medical school and the University of California Board of Regents, charging that thousands of cadavers had been illegally disposed of. The suit is still pending.

Rovers roll toward new sites on Mars

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Mars rovers moved toward new rocks to drill on Saturday, a day after the Spirit rover found geological evidence that the dusty Red Planet had a wet past.

The Opportunity rover prepared for another drilling job as Spirit—positioned halfway around the planet—rolled slowly toward the rim of a crater called "Bonneville."

The six-wheeled Spirit moved 94 feet northeast toward the crater after snapping the final photographs that scientists will use to assemble a full-circle, full-color panorama of the region dubbed "Middle Ground."

Meanwhile, Opportunity used its tool-laden robotic arm to inspect a rock called "Wave Ripple" and took 50 microscopic images. It then drove to a new target at the south end of the outcropping that it has been examining for weeks. Its wheels slipped in the soil and it had to move along a slight slope, but the job was accomplished.

Opportunity planned to use its rock abrasion tool to grind away on a feature called "Flat Rock" over the weekend.

Ashcroft awaits test result in hospital

WASHINGTON (AP)—Attorney General John Ashcroft remained hospitalized Saturday in an intensive care unit for treatment of a severe case of gallstone pancreatitis, a serious and painful abdominal illness.

Justice Department spokesman Mark Corallo said Ashcroft was being treated with antibiotics and painkillers. Corallo said there has been no change in his condition.

Doctors were still evaluating the attorney general and awaiting results of tests before deciding on their next steps, which could include surgery.

Pancreatitis is treated with antibiotics and fasting, and often clears up after a week or so. But in some cases, surgery is required. In extreme cases, it can kill.

Ashcroft, 61, became ill Thursday but initially thought he had a stomach flu. His condition worsened and he was admitted to the George Washington University Hospital later that night.

Asia

China budget boosts military, rural areas

By ELAINE KURTENBACH
AP Writer

BEIJING (AP)—Putting its money on stability, the Chinese government on Saturday announced a 2004 budget that sharply raises spending for the restive countryside and hands a double-digit increase to an outdated military grappling with a changing world.

China’s communist leaders say they are trading blind economic expansion for a

more stable model of growth as they struggle to narrow the gap that divides newly affluent city dwellers and the perennially poor farmers who feed the nation.

The new budget balanced long-overdue hikes in spending on rural construction, education and health care with an 11.6 percent—or \$2.6 billion—rise in military spending that Finance Minister Jin Renqing said was needed to improve the “defensive combat readiness of

the armed forces under high-tech conditions.”

China does not publicize its spending on weapons, research and development and other costs. The Pentagon puts actual outlays at up to four times the public figures. Last year’s announced military budget was \$22.4 billion.

The 2.5-million-member People’s Liberation Army is the world’s largest but lags behind U.S. and other major forces in technology despite big purchases of advanced submarines and aircraft in recent years.

Jin, the finance minister, put total revenue for the central budget at \$157 billion, up 7

percent—or \$10.9 billion—from last year. The budget also includes a 7 percent boost in overall spending from 2003.

Announced Saturday during the annual session of the nominal legislature, the budget is a telling glimpse into what its leaders, the stewards of a once-planned but increasingly free-wheeling economy, consider their top tasks. For this year-old complement of leaders, that means doing everything they can to create a “well-off” society and the stability it can bring.

“To get rich is glorious,” former leader Deng Xiaoping said a generation ago when he declared the communist economic

experiment over. More than 20 years of breakneck development later, the government has coined a new, user-friendly slogan: “Put people first.”

It’s a survival strategy in a country where the central authority has only a tenuous sway over vast rural regions grumbling over heavy taxes and corrupt officialdom. The preoccupation with stability dates to much earlier times, to imperial China’s obsession with keeping its borders intact and citizens placated.

The government plans to raise agricultural spending by 20 percent and cut agricultural taxes that consume meager rural

incomes. A plan to end those millennia-old taxes within five years went over well with congressional delegates.

“This tax ought not to exist in the first place. This is very important news,” said Wen Lihua, an economist and delegate from eastern China’s Zhejiang province.

Those pledges follow earlier ones to look out for the rights of much-abused migrant workers and better protect farmers’ land rights from rapacious officials bent on seizing land for development projects—a problem that state-controlled media reports suggest is alarmingly widespread.

Malaysian Islamic leader promises heaven

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Lighting a torch under one of Malaysia’s most volatile issues, the spiritual leader of the fundamentalist Islamic opposition said people who vote for it in upcoming elections will go to heaven and implied government supporters are destined for hell.

Nik Aziz Nik Mat, a 72-year-old cleric held in high esteem by millions of ethnic Malay Muslims, was quoted in a newspaper report Saturday, days after election officials warned candidates not to bring religion into the campaign at the risk of disqualification.

Religion and ethnicity are multicultural Malaysia’s most sensitive issues, and contributed to race riots 30 years ago that still resonate in today’s society. Political parties remain largely divided along ethnic lines, though both the opposition and the government are in multi-ethnic coalitions.

“It is stated in the Quran that those who rally behind Islam are also those who want to live under

divine laws laid down by Allah,” Nik Aziz was quoted as saying in The Star newspaper. “And naturally, they will go to heaven for choosing an Islamic party, while those who support un-Islamic parties will logically go to hell.”

Anuar Bukhary, Nik Aziz’s press secretary, told The Associated Press the quotes were accurate.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi’s secular government claims the fundamentalists use Islam for political gain and foment extremism, while the opposition charges that UMNO is immoral and not Islamic enough.

Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who retired in October after 22 years in power but has vowed to help Abdullah win the election, responded to the claim by taunting his old foe.

“I want to ask Nik Aziz, when is he going to heaven to see if those who voted for the party made it there?” Mahathir, 78, was quoted as saying by the national news agency, Bernama.

Report says Japan to parole child killer

TOKYO (AP)—A youth who decapitated a boy and bludgeoned a girl to death in one of Japan’s most notorious juvenile crimes will be paroled after spending more than six years in a reformatory, a newspaper reported Saturday.

Authorities are “making final arrangements” for the release of the 21-year-old, who was 14 at the time of the killings in the western city of Kobe in 1997, the Yomiuri newspaper reported, citing unnamed sources at the nation’s Justice Ministry.

The killings led to a national debate over how to deal with minors who commit heinous crimes and culminated

in a decision by lawmakers three years later to lower the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 14.

The perpetrator of the Kobe killings, whose name has never been made public, has received psychiatric counseling and vocational training since October 1997 at two reformatories.

The Justice Ministry said last year that efforts to rehabilitate him had “achieved results.”

The report Saturday said the ministry has made an exceptional decision to issue a statement informing the public when the youth has been paroled because of the enormous social impact of the case.

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US forces kill nine alleged Taliban

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER
AP WRITER

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—U.S. special-operations snipers killed nine suspected Taliban militants in the Afghan mountains bordering Pakistan, marking one of American forces' deadliest engagements in months.

The military would not say if the clash marked the start of a promised spring offensive to capture Osama bin Laden, though a spokesman said the fighting began when as many as 40 suspected Taliban tried to flank the position held by the Americans and their Afghan army allies.

Over the past two weeks,

U.S. commanders have pledged what they call a hammer-and-anvil approach for the spring thaw into summer, with the crucial support of Pakistan troops on their own side of the Afghan frontier.

Under that plan, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region where terror suspects are thought to be hiding becomes the anvil against which terror suspects would be hammered, the military said.

With bin Laden and other top al-Qaida and Taliban fugitives the subject of redoubled U.S. attention, the world's news crews have launched a spring offensive of their own. U.S. news organizations are rapidly boosting staff in the Afghan

Afghan aid worker killed by gunmen

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP)—Gunmen shot and killed an Afghan aid worker Saturday as he drove home from work in a restive southern province, a senior official said.

Dr. Isha Khan, 33, director for the Red Crescent Society in southern Zabul province, was attacked at around 5 p.m. on a road between the town of Qalat and Khan's home village of

capital, Kabul.

But after touting the planned offensive, the U.S. military now appears bent on tamping down expectations.

"I don't have any other

Nokhaiz, 10 miles to the north.

Khan's brother, also in the vehicle, was unhurt, regional governor Khial Mohammed Hussein told The Associated Press.

Hussein said the circumstances of the attack and the identities of the gunmen were unknown. He said troops had been sent to investigate.

Rebels of the former ruling Taliban have targeted aid

information about Osama bin Laden," military spokesman Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said at a news conference Saturday at the U.S. base in Kabul.

Hilferty addressed reporters

workers over the past year in an apparent bid to undermine the U.S.-backed central government and reconstruction efforts in the war-battered country.

Zabul is one of the most volatile regions in the country. On Friday, gunmen killed a Turkish engineer and an Afghan soldier on a major highway there.

before a budding almond tree, its white blooms testifying to the warming air in the Kabul valley, and the melting snow in the Afghanistan-Pakistan mountains where bin Laden may be hiding.

"If I knew where he was, I would go get him," he said. In January, Hilferty had said he was "sure" the United States and its allies would catch bin Laden by the end of the year.

Pakistan's interior minister echoed that sentiment in a television interview broadcast Saturday, saying it is only a matter of time before bin Laden and his followers are captured.

"There is an operation going on," Faisal Saleh Hayyat told the Dubai-based Al Arabiya satellite channel. "Osama bin Laden or some of his followers will probably be captured within days or weeks if these operations continue. Also, perhaps it will take more time until they are captured."

HEY, JOE!

Filipino children from the fishing village of Dingalan Bay, 80 kilometers north of Manila, call out to U.S. Marines from Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, Thursday, March 4, 2004, during the amphibious assault training exercise "Balikatan 2004." The annual U.S.-Filipino military exercise is currently aimed at fighting terrorism in the region.

AP



ASIAN Brief

British man gets life for spying in China

BEIJING (AP)—A Chinese court has sentenced a Hong Kong-based British citizen to life in prison for spying, a newspaper reported Saturday.

Chan Yu-lam, 53, is a former employee of the Hong Kong bureau of China's official Xinhua News Agency. The bureau acted as China's consulate in the former British colony before it returned to mainland rule in 1997.

He was sentenced Friday in the southern city of Guangzhou, near Hong Kong, the South China Morning Post reported, citing his lawyer. It said the lawyer refused to give details of the case because of a possible appeal. Chinese officials also have not publicly discussed the case.

The Washington Post reported this week that Chan was charged for discussing China's 1989 crackdown on Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests with a British agent and for giving the agent phone numbers for the Xinhua bureau. The report said he was tried Feb. 24.

The British Embassy confirmed this week that Chan had been detained but not that he was charged with espionage.

Military copter crashes in RP, five slightly hurt

CAGAYAN DE ORO, Philippines (AP)—A military helicopter crashed in the southern Philippines early Saturday, slightly injuring two pilots and three other crew members, the army said.

The UH-1H aircraft crashed in a corn field outside the town of Saguayan in Lanao del Sur province shortly after taking off from nearby Marawi city, southern military commander Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko said.

Air force spokesman Lt. Col. Restituto Padilla said the helicopter was on its way to

Cagayan de Oro city to transport extra security for President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo including senior military officials.

Padilla said the cause of the crash is still unknown.

The five crew members suffered only minor injuries and were brought to a hospital, he said.

Report: Japan to resume space rocket launches

TOKYO (AP)—Japan plans to launch a weather satellite before the end of the year, a report said Sunday, the first liftoff for the country's troubled space program since a mission carrying two spy satellites ended in fiery failure last year.

The Science Ministry aims to put the new satellite into orbit in November or December, Kyodo News reported citing an unnamed government source.

The ministry plans to conduct several more tests on a revised booster for its homegrown H2-A rocket, but is otherwise ready to launch within the year, the report said.

Malaysia arrests 6 alleged Indon militants

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Malaysian authorities arrested six Indonesian militants as they returned home from a Jemaah Islamiyah training camp in the southern Philippines, a senior government official said Saturday.

The six were arrested two months ago near Tawau town in eastern Sabah state on Borneo island and have been detained under security laws allowing indefinite detention without trial, the official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

"The six are all Indonesians who had just finished attending a Jemaah Islamiyah camp in the southern Philippines," the official said. "They had stopped to spend some time in Tawau before continuing their journey to Indonesia when Malaysian police arrested them."

The many hats of North Korea's Kim Jong Il

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—When it comes to inventing honorifics for North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, the communist propagandists know no bounds.

From mountain cliffs and village walls to school textbooks and television newscasts, Kim is hailed as the "Great Leader," "Heaven-sent Great General," "World-renowned Literary Man," and "Guardian of Our Planet."

Kim, who rules the globe's most isolated country in an ironclad personality cult, is commonly known as the "Dear Leader." But he has a total of 1,200 titles, according to Pyongyang's state radio.

Just to name a few, he is "The Illustrious General of All Illustrious Generals," "The Saint of All Saints" and "The Lodestar

of the 21st Century."

While thousands of North Koreans flee the country's desperate conditions every year, other citizens remain true believers in Kim—thanks to brainwashing or ignorance. Most North Koreans have known only the rule of Kim and his father, the totalitarian patriarch and "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung, who took over the North from Japanese colonizers after World War II.

Kim Jr. was once dismissed as an eccentric late-night carouser. But he proved a shrewd tactician who quickly solidified power after his father's 1994 death by using perks, nepotism and gulags to command loyalty. Along with inventing grand

titles for Kim, the North's propaganda scribes depict him as an expert marksman who loves making movies, composes masterpiece operas and shoots five holes-in-one in a single golf round.

Pyongyang's state-run Central Radio said in a November dispatch that many of Kim's 1,200 titles were bestowed by "dignitaries from 160 countries in five continents"

who extolled the leader's "extraordinary personality, peerless leadership and immortal feats."

The official press eulogizes Kim as "a philosophical giant" with "encyclopedic knowledge," "a master of literature, arts and architecture," "humankind's greatest genius of music," and "greatest

incarnation of human wisdom."

They even deify him as "the present-day God."

Kim has reportedly written hundreds of books and major theses "unparalleled in history."

To drive home the propaganda message, school children memorize Kim Jong Il's aphorisms, usually off-the-cuff comments said to contain "all the truths of the world."

Among these: "It is not money or an atomic bomb that moves the world, but a great idea," and "A man's height is the height of his thought."

The 62-year-old Kim is about 5-foot-3-inches (160 centimeters), but he stands tall in official portraits against a backdrop of Manchurian blizzards or stormy seas. He also is said to favor platform shoes, along with his oversized sunglasses.



Kim

World

6 Palestinians killed in failed attack

By IBRAHIM BARZAK
AP WRITER

EREZ CROSSING, Gaza Strip (AP)—Palestinian gunmen and suicide car bombers staged an elaborate attack against a major Israeli checkpoint on Saturday, in what militant groups called revenge for recent airstrikes targeting their members.

Four assailants and two Palestinian policemen were killed, but no Israeli soldiers were hurt.

The attackers used vehicles that looked nearly identical to Israeli army jeeps, complete with military markings, black-and-white army license plates and flashing lights on the roof. It was the latest surge of violence ahead of a proposed Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Militants said Saturday they were stepping up attacks to show they were forcing Israel out of Gaza. Israel was expected to intensify military strikes ahead of a withdrawal to avoid the impression of surrender. Seven Palestinians have been killed in targeted Israeli air strikes in Gaza City in the past week.

The attack began at about 10 a.m. when a Palestinian taxi sped into the Erez crossing zone between Gaza and Israel and exploded just outside a heavily fortified army checkpoint.

Moments later, two more attackers in a jeep with Israeli military markings pulled up. One of the men jumped out and opened fire with an assault rifle. Troops fired back, killing the pair.

A second vehicle disguised as an army jeep blew up outside the crossing zone, apparently after Palestinian policemen guarding the Gaza side blocked



Israeli army soldiers check the bodies of two of four Palestinian militants that were killed during an attempted attack against the Israeli terminal of the Erez crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel Saturday, March 6, 2004.

Israeli forces kill 3 in Gaza camps raid

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—A few dozen Israeli tanks and armored vehicles surrounded two refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip early Sunday, setting off gunbattles with dozens of militants that left three Palestinians dead and five wounded, according to Palestinian security officials and hospital doctors.

The Israeli forces, backed

its path. Two Palestinian policemen were killed.

The military said they were hit by the spray of shrapnel as the third car exploded, but

by at least two Apache helicopter gunships hovering overhead, moved slowly down alleys and side streets on the outskirts of the Bureij and Nusseirat refugee camps around 4 a.m. (0200 GMT), and military sniper units took up positions on several rooftops, witnesses said.

Residents of the area reported hearing intense gunbattles punctuated by loud explosions.

Palestinian hospital officials said the two had gunshot wounds. Nineteen people, including police officers and taxi drivers, were wounded, two

of them critically. Israeli military sources said only that "a pinpoint action against terror infrastructure" was underway in central Gaza, without elaborating.

Calls for gunmen to come out and fight the Israeli forces came over mosque loudspeakers in the camp and dozens of men from several militant factions poured into the streets, clashing with the troops.

Among the three dead Palestinians was a teenager, said Ibrahim al-Musder, director of the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Hospital in the nearby town of Deir el-Balah. There was no word on any Israeli casualties.

In Nusseirat camp, soldiers surrounded the homes of two leaders of the Popular Resistance Committees, an umbrella group made up of members of several militant factions.

the attack, calling it a joint "self-sacrifice operation."

The attacks followed promises of revenge for recent the air strikes.

Blast hits Moscow apartment building

MOSCOW (AP)—An explosion tore through a Moscow apartment building before dawn Sunday, causing casualties and forcing evacuation of the 14-story building.

The blast hit about 4:20 a.m. (0100 GMT), destroying several apartments in the dilapidated concrete-panel building on Chertanovsky Street in southern Moscow.

Two people were hospitalized with injuries from the

blast, said Valery Buzovkin, a police spokesman at the scene. However, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported eight people were hospitalized.

The cause of the blast was not immediately determined, although authorities said initial indications were that it was caused by gas.

Sofia Alimova, who lives on the building's 10th floor, said the apartment where the blast was centered consisted of one room,

usually occupied by a couple.

"We heard a loud bang and I ran to the window because all the car alarms were going off. I looked out the window and it seemed quiet, but a neighbor called and said there was an explosion on the 4th floor," she said.

"I put my coat on over my nightgown and left as quickly as I could," she said, standing in the snowy street near the building, some of whose windows were shattered.

Haitian rebels say they won't disarm yet

GONAIVES, Haiti (AP)—Before a raging fire, rebel fighters in this bleak western town offered metal scraps Saturday to a voodoo war god, portending still more violence for Haiti.

Though rebel leader Guy Philippe has pledged his fighters will disarm, many insist they will not give up their weapons until militant supporters of exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide do the same.

Rebels who choose not to show their weapons in public openly admit they have stashed them for later use. And the Gonaives ceremony to Ogun Feray, the war god, indicates Haiti's bloody uprising might not be over.

"In terms of where the guns are and who we will surrender them to, that's a secret," said local rebel

commander Winter Etienne, 40. "When you lay down your arms you always want to have them someplace where you can pick them up again if you need them."

The challenge of disarmament is just one of many stumbling blocks facing the impoverished Caribbean nation, where an armed rebellion that began Feb. 5 has killed at least 130 people and forced Aristide to flee the country.

On Saturday in Port-au-Prince, a recently appointed council met to choose a new prime minister. Officials said they hoped to have a decision by Tuesday. Opposition leaders have been pressing for the replacement of Yvon Neptune, who stayed in his post even after Aristide fled the country.

Leslie Voltaire, a minister in Aristide's government and a member of the tripartite

commission that chose the council, said he was satisfied with the group's neutrality and independence.

"They will meet today, they will meet Sunday, and by Monday we will have a new prime minister," Voltaire said.

U.S. Marines patrolling the capital withdrew some of their guards from around the presidential National Palace and the prime minister's office Saturday after it became clear that the overwhelming show of force had become a sore point with Haitians.

"We've just basically pulled them back, trying to provide less of a military presence in the areas and allow people to get back to their daily lives without us hanging over them," said Staff Sgt. Timothy Edwards. "We don't want to appear like an occupation force."

Bush backs off fingerprinting Mexicans

CRAWFORD, Texas (AP)—President Bush gave Mexican President Vicente Fox a gift to take home on Saturday: his pledge to exempt certain frequent Mexican visitors from onerous new security checks at the U.S. border.

The visit by Fox to Bush's Central Texas ranch, held a

year and a half after it was originally scheduled, was designed to lay past disputes to rest. But with Bush eager to boost his standing in the U.S. Hispanic community, the nation's fastest-growing voting bloc, American politics were never far from the agenda.

Bush used the leaders' joint

appearance before Mexican and American reporters to make clear how he sees the November election, in which he almost certainly will face Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass. "The question is who brings forth the best pro-growth policies ... who (is) best to lead this country in the war on terror," Bush said.

Iraqis determined to sign constitution

By MATT MOORE
AP WRITER

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—Shiite members of Iraq's Governing Council on Saturday conferred with the country's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, to resolve a dispute that held up the signing of an interim constitution. An official said the document would likely be signed Monday.

Also Saturday, U.S. soldiers opened fire on a truck packed with explosives, killing the driver, and three Americans were wounded when the truck crashed on a bridge and exploded.

The apparent vehicle-bomb

attack was in Habaniyah, west of Baghdad. In Amarah, seven British soldiers were wounded in a three-hour firefight with unknown attackers in southern Iraq, coalition officials said. Three Iraqis were killed, British officials said.

Al-Sistani rejected two clauses in the interim charter—one that would have given Iraq's Kurds the power to scuttle a permanent charter and another that would have provided for a single president instead of a rotating leadership.

Reflecting al-Sistani's objections, the Shiite council members refused on Friday to sign the interim constitution hours before it was supposed to be

signed, embarrassing U.S. officials and providing a stark reminder of the ayatollah's enormous influence in Iraqi politics.

With negotiations reopened, a Kurdish official said his side would not consent to changing the clause, which was agreed to by the entire council when it approved the constitution on Monday after several days of intense debate.

"We are sticking to it because it's a legitimate demand," said Kosrat Rasul, an official in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of two main Kurdish parties on the council.

Officials would not comment on the talks among the Shiites in Najaf, and it was not

clear whether the Shiite politicians were trying to work out alternatives with al-Sistani, explore what phrasing would be acceptable for him or persuade him to drop his objections.

Still, they said they expected to resolve the dispute by Monday.

"We have announced that Monday is the date for the signing of the law and we are determined to stick to this date," Mohammad Bahr al-Ulloum told reporters in Najaf, site of Shiites' holiest shrine.

The interim constitution, which will remain in effect until the end of 2005 after a permanent charter is approved, is a crucial part of a U.S. plan for handing

over power to the Iraqis on June 30. It took intense negotiations last weekend, shepherded by the Americans, to overcome sharp divisions and reach a deal.

Al-Sistani's son, Mohammed, shuttled back and forth between his father's home and Bahr al-Ulloum's office in Najaf, where the Shiite council members gathered Saturday.

Whatever compromise is worked out with al-Sistani must be agreed to by the other 20 members of the council.

"They should have discussed this issue since the beginning. It was a surprise for everyone," Rasul, of the PUK, told AP. "Everybody was prepared to

sign the constitution" on Friday.

Mahmoud Othman, an independent Kurd on the council, said he was hopeful the document would be signed Monday. He invited al-Sistani to send a delegate to talks in Baghdad to ensure a deal is reached.

"If Sistani wants to send a representative to the council, he can," he told Associated Press Television News on Saturday.

Al-Sistani has twice before derailed U.S. plans, with objections to the timetable and methods for transferring sovereignty to an Iraqi government. The Bush administration wants to carry out the transfer well before November U.S. presidential elections.

Hundreds of thousands march in Venezuela

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)—Blowing whistles and chanting, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans marched through Caracas on Saturday to protest the rejection of a petition aimed at recalling President Hugo Chavez.

Protesters streamed toward a central avenue from several gathering points in the capital, many dressed from head to toe in the national colors of red, yellow and blue. Officials said at least 500,000 people took part.

"It doesn't matter how many obstacles they put in our way!" bellowed opposition leader Enrique Mendoza, to an eruption of cheers. "Don't let them intimidate us!"

The march was peaceful, in contrast with last week's demonstrations. At least eight people were killed and hundreds arrested in five days of rioting set off by the National Elections Council's decision.

One protester's sign read: "I'm not armed. Don't shoot! I'm Venezuelan."

Emilia Duran, 72, wore a shirt that read "my signature counts."

"I want my grandchildren to live in liberty," she said.

The council accepted only 1.8 million of the 3 million-plus signatures submitted by opposition leaders in December. The minimum required is 2.4 million.

The council demanded confirmation of 1 million signatures, citing procedural violations. Another 140,000 signatures were rejected outright.

"We're prepared to take to the streets a thousand times until we're allowed the recall referendum," said opposition leader Henry Ramos Allup. "Nobody is going to rob us of our right to oust Hugo Chavez peacefully."

Opposition leaders have appealed to the Organization of American States and the U.S.-based Carter Center for support, saying the stability of the world's fifth-biggest oil exporter is at stake.

Street violence abated last week after the OAS and Carter Center promised to help ensure



Anti-President Hugo Chavez protesters march against Chavez in Caracas, Venezuela, Saturday, March 6, 2004.

that citizens would have a chance to prove they signed. Negotiations over the process continued Saturday.

Venezuela is sharply split between those who fear Chavez is trying to install Cuba-style dictatorship and those who say he has given a political voice to the impoverished majority. The president's six-year term ends in 2007. The constitution allows recalls halfway through an

elected official's term.

Chavez insists election officials have reason to suspect the petition is fraudulent. In a two-hour speech to foreign ambassadors Friday, the president displayed copies of petition forms bearing the names of foreigners, minors and people long deceased. But he promised to respect the council's final decision on whether to hold the referendum—and to abide by the

outcome of any eventual vote.

Chavez also denied National Guard troops committed abuses while trying to control rioting last week. He said his opponents, who burned tires, blocked roads and hurled gasoline bombs at soldiers, instigated the violence.

He accused the United States of spreading lies about his government and urged foreign governments to condemn U.S. intrusion in Venezuelan affairs.

Helicopter rescues 12 researchers on Arctic ice

MOSCOW (AP)—Twelve Russian researchers were plucked from an Arctic ice floe Saturday, three days after a chunk of the floe disappeared beneath the sea and took most of their meteorological station with it.

Two Russian helicopters left the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen, some 450 miles southeast of the floe, early Saturday and returned with the researchers, their remaining equipment and two dogs about 10 hours later.

A large piece of the floe broke off Wednesday and four of the North Pole-32 research station's six buildings were lost.

The researchers, who had been recording weather conditions and studying climate change, were unhurt and had enough supplies to survive for several day.

Deputy parliament speaker Artur Chilingarov, a renowned polar explorer who took part in the rescue, said he expected the men would make a festive return for International Women's Day on Monday, a major holiday in Russia.

"We hope that the polar researchers and their families will be able to celebrate the holiday in a homey environment," he was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

The rescue effort involved two helicopters—an Mi-8 that found the researchers, landed on the ice floe and transmitted its coordinates; and a heavy-load Mi-26 that loaded up the researchers and their equipment.

The research station was set up on the floe in April 2003. The floe had drifted some 1,710 miles south before it broke up.

Mock trial held for Ciudad Juarez deaths

CHIHUAHUA, Mexico (AP)—Mothers of the slain women of Ciudad Juarez received a measure of symbolic justice on Saturday, during a mock trial in northern Mexico.

Mexican authorities say 258 women have been killed over the past decade in Juarez, including nearly 100 eerily similar killings in which the victims were sexually assaulted, strangled and dumped in the nearby desert.

Seven mothers of women who were killed or disappeared from the rough border town testified at the First Trial of Conscience before a jury of human rights activists.

The mock jury of six demanded a political trial of Chihuahua state Governor Patricio Martinez and his predecessor, Francisco Barrio, and the immediate firing of Chihuahua state prosecutor Jesus Jose Solis.

The jury of conscience also called for sanctions against judges, magistrates, police and other

officials for failing to act or obstructing the investigation, allowing crimes to go unpunished.

"Finding the people responsible for these crimes is urgent," said Silvia Solis Hernandez, of the Protest Campaign Against Femicide and Impunity in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua, one of dozens of human rights groups to attend the mock trial. "But it's also urgent to hold responsible authorities for negligence, for omissions, tolerance, complicity and corruption."

Although there have been more than a dozen arrests in connection with the Juarez killings, only one man—and Egyptian resident of the United States—has been convicted of one killing. Meanwhile, bodies continue to turn up.

Testimony from victims' families Saturday asserted that the practice of torture to produce confessions continues in the state of Chihuahua.

Health & Fitness

Knees: Baby boomers fight the decline of age

By LINDA SEARING
THE WASHINGTON POST

The Monday after New Year's, Dan Murphy got up at 6 a.m. and ran 10 miles from his home in Bethesda, Md., to Sibley Memorial Hospital in Northwest Washington. There he traded Saucony running shoes for hospital-issued flip-flops and had surgery on his right knee. Baby boomers, after all, can't let a little pain keep them down.

After 30 years of running, Murphy's knee needed realignment. Tendon tightness on one side, he explained, had nudged the kneecap into a position where it rubbed on another bone. Surgery was required to release the tightness and allow the kneecap to return to its rightful spot—and to allow Murphy to return to running pain-free.

A week after his surgery, Murphy had already ditched his crutches, and walked roughly two miles to a subway station.

Though on the younger end of the baby boom, Murphy, who turns 40 in May, typifies the uncompromising attitude that this age group seems to be taking toward its knees. Today's middle-aged people, say experts, are unwilling to give in to the wear and tear on vulnerable joints. Instead, they're turning to therapy, injections, supplements, surgery, transplants—whatever can put them back on the track, on the court or in the gym.

Case in point: President Bush, whose age of 57 places him among the roughly 75 million Americans called baby boomers—those who were born between 1946 and 1964. Bush took a grudging break from running after a December MRI confirmed "post-traumatic degenerative changes in the medial compartment of the right knee," according to a report released by the White House. But Bush clearly positioned his retreat to the elliptical trainer as temporary.

"My New Year's resolution this year is to work, stay physically fit to the point where I can run—in other words, rehab my knee," he told reporters Jan. 1 outside his Texas ranch. "I miss running. The elliptical machine is good, but it just doesn't have that same sense that running gave me."

It's all part of an attitude orthopedist Nicholas DiNubile calls "fix-me-itis."

"Boomers want to find ways to keep on going, and they're constantly wanting to turn back the clock," said DiNubile, a professor of orthopedic surgery at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and a spokesman for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

Craig Bennett, chief of sports medicine at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore and orthopedic surgeon for the Baltimore Ravens, sees the same pattern.

"They come in and they want to get fixed," Bennett said. "All they want to hear is give me the pill so I can go back and do what I've been doing. But it often took years to develop the problem, and it's not going to go away overnight. Very frequently, you have to change your activities."

But hanging up the spikes just isn't a popular option any more. Not even, it seems, for some people who've hardly worn them.

"There's a certain part of the population that has not taken very good care of themselves," said physical therapist John Mahoney, who works with Bennett in the University of Maryland Medical Center's sports medicine department. "When they get in their fifties, they start realizing a decline in their physical capabilities."

"What's motivating them now is that this is the first time they've seen a real decline in their physical ability," he said. "It's like a fork in the road. They can continue to decline or they can turn back the other way—what we call de-aging them." Some members of this group will embark on ambitious fitness programs to rehab their aching bodies. But the most gung-ho knee-repair enthusiasts tend to be their fitter peers.

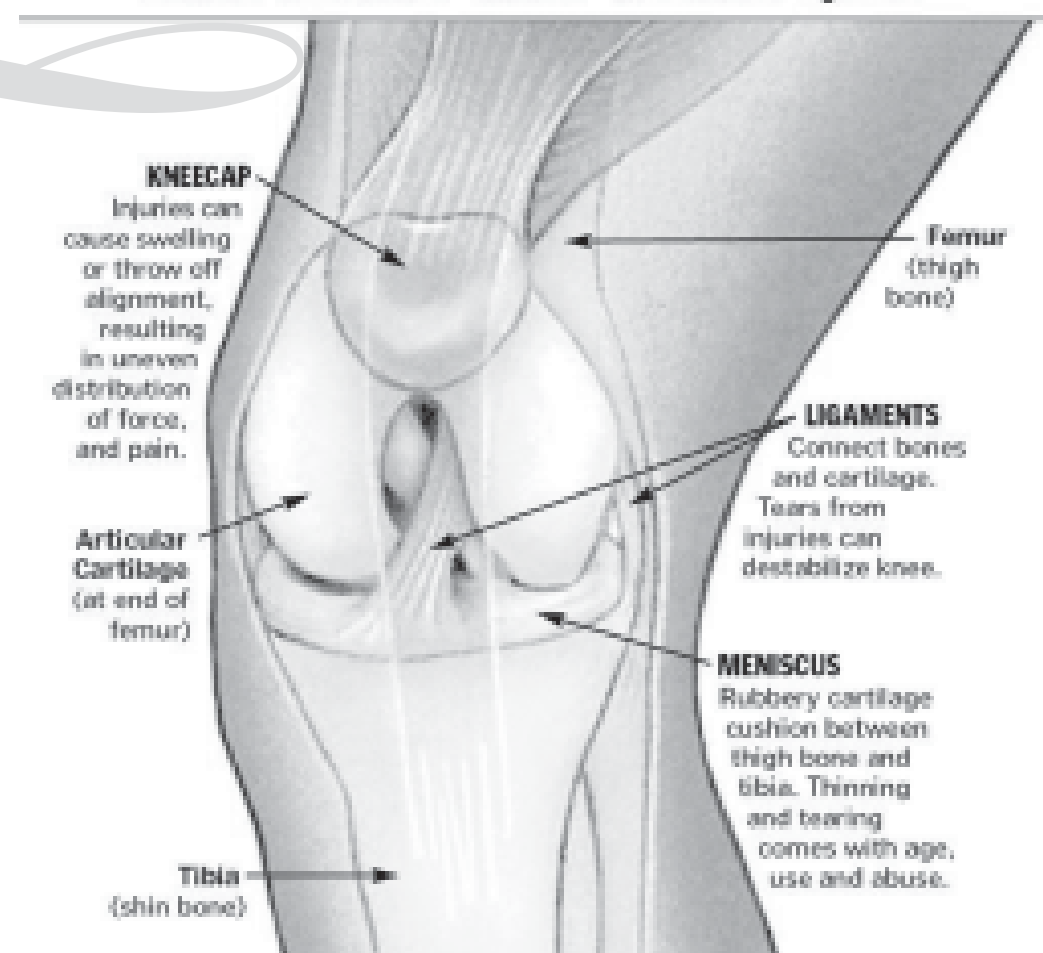
"I have a whole practice of people in (Bush's) position who want to stay active," said DiNubile. "They're informed, they've researched (their problem), they don't take no for an answer, and they'll doctor-shop, too," until they find a physician who will do what they ask.

Murphy, who has won at least 60 road races and triathlons, said he had run since he was 10 years old without a real injury. But occasional stiffness became a nagging knot, he said, until one day, "on one of those very ordinary runs around the Tidal Basin, one foot plant and boom!"

He limped home and went right to the Internet. Typing "knee injuries" into a search engine, he discovered a multitude of Web sites with enough information to whittle down his injury possibilities to a couple, including the actual culprit, the iliotibial band—a thick area of tissue that encases the muscle running up the side of the leg. "There's even a chat line for this on Yahoo—it's amazing," Murphy said.

Over the next four months he tried "ice, various topical treatments guaranteed to have

Some Boomer Knee Trouble Spots



results, rest—my own therapy according to what I'd read," he said. But the pain remained, so Murphy said he found a doctor, got an MRI, listened to the treatment options and decided on arthroscopic surgery—performed with slender instruments through small incisions.

And he fully intends to return to running and racing, saying he "would love to run competitively by early summer."

One factor working against baby boomers may be their longevity.

Average life expectancy in the United States has gone from 47 years a century ago to 77 years today, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. The problem with that, according to DiNubile: "We have outlived the warranty on our frame."

But ways to repair it have proliferated.

"There's been an explosion of alternative strategies for treating knee problems (for which), perhaps a decade ago, we had few strategies," said Benjamin Shaffer, head physician for the Washington Capitals and director of the D.C. Sports Medicine Institute.

Some of these newer options, he said, include cartilage resurfacing, realignment operations—which he described as "like realigning a car so the tire wears in a different way"—partial joint replacement and ligament reconstructions.

For many reconstructive techniques, age is not the rigid

limiting factor it once was.

DiNubile, at 51 a boomer himself, said that when he started in practice 21 years ago, "we had an unwritten rule that, if someone was over the age of 35, you didn't operate on them" for torn anterior cruciate ligaments, one of four key ligaments that hold the knee in place.

"That rule is gone now," he said. "You can actually go in and fix it ... even if they're 50."

Just because they can fix a knee in some way, though, doesn't mean they always should do it, the doctors agree.

"People read about these (techniques and procedures) in the paper and they come in with the articles, and they want this surgery," DiNubile said. "Sometimes you have to talk them down from that."

Take, for instance, damage to the meniscus, one of the more common problems orthopedists see among middle-age patients. Bennett describes the meniscus as "the mattress pad or cushion in the knee," adding that "when you're active and doing things over and over for years and years, you can wear out the meniscus."

public auditor

Life & Style

Mushers ready for Iditarod sled dog race



Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race rookie Jim Warren, 59, right, from Linwood, Mich., gets a lick from one of his lead dogs, Utah, far right, as his son, Chris, holds Brutus, Warren's other lead dog in Wasilla, Alaska, Feb. 27, 2004. AP

By MARY PEMBERTON
AP WRITER

Fans crowded downtown Anchorage on Saturday to get autographs and be photographed with their favorite mushers in the annual send-off for the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

The ceremonial start of the 1,100-

mile race from Anchorage to Nome—the world's longest sled dog race—is held each year on the first Saturday in March. The serious racing begins Sunday.

"I'm so excited," said Nancy Jostad of Hoboken, N.J., who came to Alaska especially for the start of the race. She waited in line to have her picture taken

with Aliy Zirkle, one of 17 female racers in the 2004 field.

"Women rock," Jostad said.

This year's competitors come from as far away as Italy, Germany and Norway.

Suzanne Jammin came all the way from Washington, D.C., to be photographed with four-time Iditarod winner Martin Buser, who is running in his 21st Iditarod.

"We have followed him since the beginning," said Jammin, who recently moved from Alaska.

Buser came in fourth last year and won in 2002. "I'm just getting good," he said.

The Iditarod, now in its 32nd year, commemorates a 674-mile relay race from Nenana to Nome in February 1925, when dog teams successfully delivered serum to prevent an outbreak of diphtheria among children.

A record 87 teams are competing this year. The purse is more than \$700,000, with the winner getting \$69,000 and a new pickup truck worth more than \$41,000.

It normally takes the top teams nine to 10 days to reach Nome.

Only Buser has done it in less than nine days, finishing the 2002 race in eight days, 22 hours and 46 minutes.

Buser said his team this year is a lot like the 2002 team: "Quiet, confident, even, deep and balanced."

Gaultier hits his stride with Hermes

PARIS (AP)—Jean-Paul Gaultier took on his new assignment at a gallop. He showed his first collection for the historic house of Hermes at the 19th century Ecole Militaire—cavalry branch. The Saturday show was the most dramatic and exciting event so far in this week of fall-winter ready-to-wear.

More than 1,000 guests packed the huge riding ring, where the models pranced in true riding gear style, crops and all. They wore little top hats a la George Sand, fitted jackets, wrapped skirts for sidesaddles, and then, of course, jodhpurs.

Gaultier was a natural to take over from Martin Margiela, whose contract expired. The house has backed Gaultier in his own couture business for several years.

Hermes is known for leather. But it got its start in saddlery, outfitting equestrians.

The clothes were great, from prune jumpers with twinset cashmere sweaters to alligator taupe skirts with pointed flares at the hems.

More classic fare included a beautiful forest green skirt with dark tights paired with a soft brown suede tunic with a hood. In the same autumnal spirit was a lightly fitted classic burgundy leather jacket over a forest green jersey dress worn with Hermes riding boots.

Gaultier could not resist some of his own favorites, like the ribbed brown

leather corselet-bustier, worn with jodhpurs. There were great choices for those who go to the races, too, such as a salt and pepper classic suit with slim cuffed trousers.

The jockey look of Hermes silks in bright scarves and satin trousers gave flashes of color throughout.

Superb leather double breasted coats and trench coats looked wonderful, especially on former supermodel Linda Evangelista.

Blue and brown leather kilts with their cashmere pullovers were elaborate and fun. The jokey Gaultier had fun, too, with additions like a white horse tail on the back of a belt.

Young and elegant, the Nina Ricci show offered both warmth and subtle sexy touches.

The latest designer here, Sweden's Lars Nilsson, worked for notables like Christian Lacroix and Bill Blass before coming to Ricci two seasons ago.

This collection shows his talents in tailoring ideas, such as the original slate blue and black tweed jacket with its amusing puffy rounded collar with bow—over lean clamdigger-style pants.

Lots of high-waisted dresses looked party-pretty and fluid, especially a silk, yellow paisley print number with a tie at the decollete.

The big story here was in coats: There were handsome cape-jackets in the subtle grays and blues over swirling skirts. Longer coats were striking, such as a full and flared black model cut in patchwork style, with welt seaming.

Paris doesn't shy away from furs. In its luxury tradition, Ricci also offers a fabulous muted blue-gray mink coat with horizontal skins, flared below the knee. Sable, fox and astrakhan (Persian lamb) also appear in little details and toppers.

The wintry tones so popular everywhere cropped up at Paco Rabanne, designed by Rosemarie Rodriguez, who saw Rabanne's woman as enveloped in gray coats, light blue fur vests, a short skirt below the knee.

The signature Rabanne sparkly sequin details also were there.

White mink coats had mirror sequin sparkles around the shoulder. A navy trench coat with capelet effect was decked out in mirror sequin trim. And a pretty celadon tweed belted suit with a split straight skirt was even handsomer with its subtle sequined effects.

Dressier clothes got the full glamour treatment from Rodriguez. They included a curvaceous sequined sheath in two pieces joined by a slinky band, revealing plenty of flesh between bottom and top.

A model presents a creation by French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier during his Fall-Winter ready-to-wear 2004-2005 fashion show in Paris, Tuesday March 3, 2004. AP



Journalist Novak poking fun at CIA leak

WASHINGTON (AP)—The serious news of the day—from Saddam Hussein’s spider hole to Medicare to gay marriage—served as fodder for song, dance and silly dress-up Saturday night in the Gridiron dinner, a 119-year tradition of Washington journalism.

In the most unusual turn of this year’s satirical script, syndicated columnist Robert Novak—who sparked a federal investigation by printing the name of an undercover CIA officer—was taking the stage as that CIA officer’s disgruntled husband, former ambassador Joseph Wilson.

Dressed as Wilson in top hat and cutaway coat, Novak sings of himself: “Novak had a secret source ... so he outed a girl spy the way princes of darkness do. ... Now John Ashcroft asks Bob who and how, could be headed to the old hoosegow.”

A federal grand jury is probing whether someone in the Bush administration leaked the CIA officer’s identity, possibly a felony. Novak hasn’t commented on the investigation—until the Gridiron, in song.

Founded in 1885, the invitation-only Gridiron Club exists solely for its annual white-tie dinner, attended by Cabinet secretaries, congressional leaders and the like. The show has been visited by every president since Benjamin Harrison, except one—Grover Cleveland.

Bush spoke at the first three Gridirons of his term, but skipped this year’s show in favor of a summit at his Texas ranch with Mexican President Vicente Fox.

Gridiron President Al Hunt, a columnist for The Wall Street Journal, spun that into a pun about conservatives’ fondness for Fox News Channel: “That pretty much sums up the White House philosophy: Why waste time with newspaper reporters when you can spend quality time with Fox?”

Vice President Dick Cheney agreed to take Bush’s place, appearing along with two New Yorkers considered possible contenders for the 2008 presidential race—Democratic Sen. Hillary Clinton and Republican former Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

Political guests seem reassured by the show’s motto: “Sing, but never burn.”

Accordingly, the humor relies heavily on outlandish costumes—Ralph Nader as a skunk at the Democrats’ garden party; vegetarian presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich as a giant carrot; Bush adviser Karl Rove as Oz’s Scarecrow, singing about his boss, “If he only had MY brain.”

The voices of the club’s 60 veteran reporters, editors and columnists are augmented by more polished singers brought in as “limited members.”

OutKast, ‘Whale Rider’ vie at NAACP Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Hip-hop group OutKast and the film “Whale Rider” were up for awards at Saturday’s 35th NAACP Image Awards, which honor works by and about people of color.

OutKast had a leading six nominations, including outstanding duo or group and best album for “Speakerboxxx/The Love Below.”

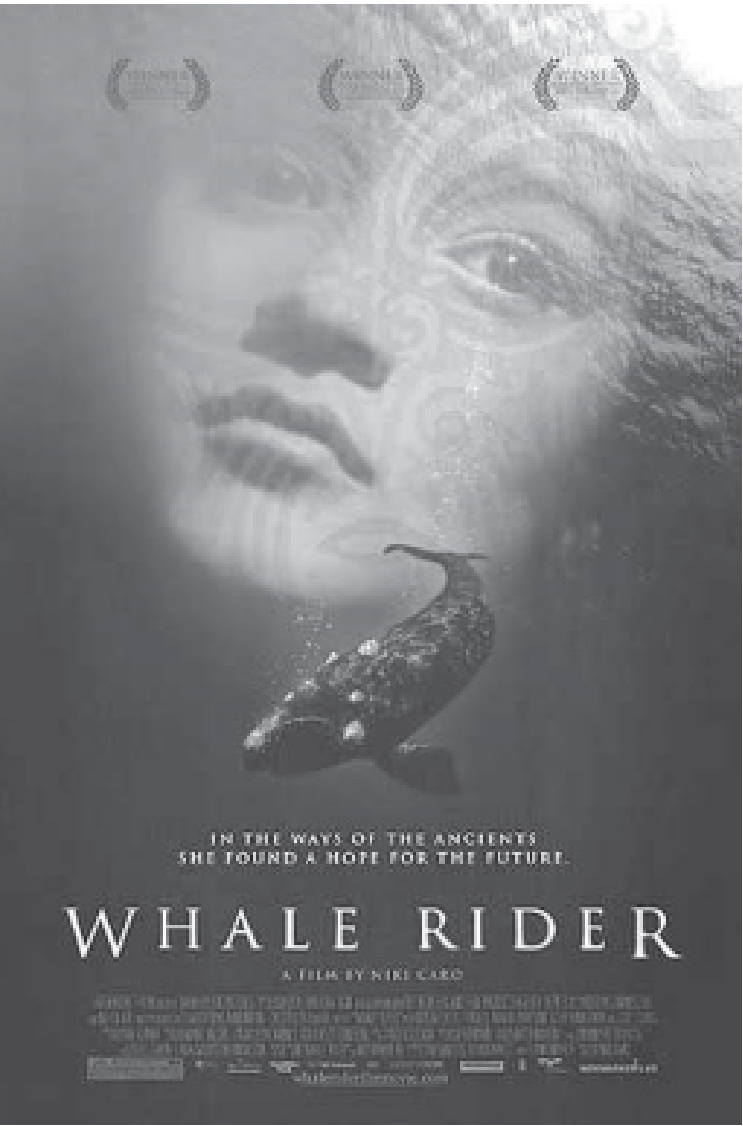
Five Image Award nominations went to Beyonce, including best female artist and outstanding song and video for “Crazy in Love.” She also was to receive an award as Entertainer of the Year.

The ceremonies were being held at Universal Amphitheatre and broadcast Thursday on Fox. They featured the induction of singer Ray Charles into the NAACP Hall of Fame.

The awards, sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, are decided by show business professionals and NAACP officials from across the country.

Special awards also were going to the Dave Matthews Band and T.D. Jakes, an evangelist and pastor of Dallas-based The Potter’s House, one of the nation’s fastest-growing churches with 59 ministries.

OutKast won three Grammy Awards last month but a performance during the telecast angered some American Indians. For a version of



“Hey Ya,” OutKast’s Andre “3000” Benjamin and several dancers wore feathers and war paint and swirled wildly around a teepee. CBS apologized to anyone who was offended.

Rosa Parks, the 90-year-old civil rights figure, has sued the group in federal court, claiming lyrics in their hit song “Rosa Parks” violated her publicity and trademark rights and defamed her. The case is making its way through the courts.

Luther Vandross, the soul singer recovering from a stroke, had four nominations for male artist and the song, album and video titled “Dance With My Father.” He won four Grammys last month.

Up for best movie was “Whale Rider,” whose 13-year-old star, Keisha Castle-Hughes, lost to Charlize Theron for the best actress Academy Award. She played a Maori girl who challenges tradition and her disbelieving grandfather to seek leadership of her tribe.

Other contenders were “Bad Boys II,” a critically panned and violent sequel to the Will Smith-Martin Lawrence action film; “Bend It Like Beckham,” about the culture clash between a British-born girl who wants to play soccer and her Indian parents; the romantic comedy “Deliver Us from Eva,” and the Gospel music comedy “The Fighting Temptations.”

Pavarotti opens farewell shows at the Met

NEW YORK (AP)—Let the goodbyes begin! Luciano Pavarotti is back at the Metropolitan Opera—though not for long.

Nearly two years after the Italian tenor drew a public rebuke from the company’s boss for calling in sick, he walked on stage to a burst of sustained applause Saturday night to sing the first of three farewell performances of Puccini’s “Tosca.”

Acknowledging the bravos with a bemused smile, he launched into one of his signature roles, the young painter and revolutionary sympathizer, Mario Cavaradossi.

The distinctive Pavarotti sound was still there in the lower register, but his high notes sounded wobbly. He also moved



Pavarotti

slowly and with apparent difficulty, but made it through the first act respectfully.

Now 68, Pavarotti had all but vanished from the opera stage since that notorious night in May 2002, when he disappointed a sell-out crowd that paid gala prices to hear him.

Except for one “Tosca” in Berlin

last June, his live appearances have been confined to concerts. He arrived in New York fresh from a performance at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, and after the Met, it’s on to Japan, Greece and Spain.

Pavarotti is also spending more time these days with his new family—wife Nicoletta Mantovani and their year-old daughter, Alice. He has three grown daughters by his first wife, whom he recently divorced.

N M P A S I

C D A N O T I C E

C U C M E E T I N G

Mom is outraged by friend's bait-and-switch child care

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: I am 28 years old and a survivor of childhood sexual abuse.

Recently, a friend I'll call "Toni" asked if my 5-year-old daughter, "Chris," could stay overnight with her 4-year-old son. I have always said no, but this time Chris wanted so badly to do it that I said yes.

Toni knows how protective I am. She assured me Chris would be safe in her care. So my husband and I went to a movie and dinner. Since we were in the neighborhood, we stopped by around 10 p.m. to check on our daughter. When we arrived, we found Toni had gone to a party and left the children with a teenage baby sitter.

The children were upstairs jumping on the bed and raising Cain. I was horrified that my child had been left with a stranger when my friend had assured me she would be there. We packed up our little girl and left.

Toni called later to find out what happened. I explained my feeling that she should not have left Chris with a stranger without discussing it with me first. She called me paranoid and said I have a mental disorder and that I can't always protect my child.

Abby, I am not asking for advice. I am asking for your opinion so that I can prove a point. I want to open other parents' eyes to the fact that in this day and age we must do whatever is in our power to protect our children—no matter whose toes we step on.



Dear Abby

PARANOID MOTHER

DEAR PARANOID: I agree that parents must do everything they can to protect their children. However, that is not what your letter is really about. Your friend was wrong to lead you to believe she would be supervising your daughter when that wasn't the case. It was dishonest and unfair, and I don't blame you for taking your child home. I see nothing wrong with parents socializing with other adults and leaving their children with a responsible sitter. But parents should have the right to screen the sitter themselves if they wish.

DEAR ABBY: When my daughter returned to college after Christmas break, my live-in boyfriend, "Ollie," informed me that he considers her to be a "guest" in our home and that she had overstayed her welcome. I feel that since she is still in school and my dependent, my home is her home and she is welcome to spend her breaks with me. My other daughter starts college in the fall, and I don't want her to feel that she, too, is a "guest" when she comes home.

This has been eating at me, Abby. I love Ollie, but there are no "choices" between my children and him. I thought he liked my children. I want to talk to Ollie to find out why he feels this way, and I am prepared to ask him to move out if he is firm about this.

Am I justified in drawing the line?

HURT AND CONFUSED

DEAR HURT: You certainly are. Because your live-in appears to be both presumptuous and controlling, be glad that he spoke up now. A child coming home for a holiday vacation is hardly a major invasion. Consider very carefully what his attitude will mean for you in years to come. It is your daughters' home as well as yours, and he should not be dictating how long they should stay.

DEAR ABBY: I have two friends who divorced during the past year and now share custody of their children. During a recent argument, they began fighting over who gets to keep the church and the minister. So, Dear Abby, who does get custody of the minister? This is a new one on me.

THE MINISTER IN QUESTION

DEAR MINISTER: Do not allow yourself to be drawn into something so petty. Both parties should be able to attend your church if they wish; there is usually more than one service on Sunday and separate sections in which to sit if they should happen to show up at the same time.

If they cannot agree to behave like civilized adults, then whichever one joined the church first should remain.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Crosby arrested on pot, gun charges

By DONNA DE LA CRUZ
AP WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Musician David Crosby was arrested on marijuana and gun possession charges early Saturday at a Times Square hotel, hours after earning a standing ovation at a New Jersey concert, police said.

Crosby, 62, a two-time inductee to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, was arrested at 1 a.m. at the DoubleTree Suites Hotel with an ounce of marijuana, a .45-caliber handgun and a knife in his possession, police said.

The singer had performed Friday night with his band, CPR, at a Wayne, N.J., college. One night earlier, they had played at the B.B. King Blues Club in Manhattan.

The veteran rocker had checked out of the hotel after the Manhattan show, but left behind a piece of luggage, police said. A hotel worker found the luggage Friday and went through it looking for identification and discovered the marijuana, gun and knives and called authorities, police said.



David Crosby performs with Crosby Stills Nash & Young at Madison Square Garden in New York in this Feb. 22, 2002, file photo.

Crosby later called the hotel to say he would be returning to pick up the luggage, and was greeted by police when he came back, investigators said.

Crosby, dressed in black jeans and a T-shirt, was charged with criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree, a felony, during his initial court appearance.

He also was charged with illegal possession of a hunting knife and illegal possession of ammunition—he had three magazines with a total of 26 rounds—and illegal possession of about one ounce of marijuana, which was found in a wooden box.

He faces up to seven years on the gun charge if convicted.

He was released on \$3,500 bail. Crosby's attorney, David Parker, could not be reached for comment.

Crosby was a founding member of both the Byrds and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. He was convicted in 1985 of drug possession in Dallas and spent a year in prison before his conviction was overturned on appeal.

NY affiliate pulls Martha Stewart show

NEW YORK (AP)—Martha Stewart's syndicated television show, "Martha Stewart Living," is being pulled from CBS's New York affiliate following the domestic maven's stock conviction.

WCBS will pull the plug on the show as of Monday and other CBS stations may follow suit, The New York Times and the

New York Post reported in Saturday editions.

The show, which had fallen in the ratings, previously aired on WCBS at 2:05 a.m. On Thursday, Stewart was nominated for a Daytime Emmy in the best host category for "Martha Stewart Living."

Stewart's conviction on four counts of conspiracy, making

false statements and obstruction of justice sent reverberations through her media empire, which also includes a syndicated column and magazines.

The New York Times syndicate which distributes "Ask Martha," a column penned by Stewart, has not yet decided what it will do with the column, the Times reported.

But Scripps Networks said it would continue airing Stewart's cooking show, "From Martha's Kitchen."

"We will continue to air 'From Martha's Kitchen' in its regular daytime slot as we evaluate these new circumstances and how they affect our key constituents," Scripps spokeswoman Cindy McConkey told the Post.

Film studios to fight for Tolkien rights

NEW YORK (AP)—Peter Jackson won't be returning to the Shire any time soon. The Oscar-winning director is planning to film "The Hobbit," the prequel to "The Lord of the Rings," trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien, but two studios must first fight over legal rights to the film.

Jackson said New Line Cinema has the rights to make the movie, but MGM has the rights to distribute it.

"I guess MGM's lawyers and New Line's lawyers are going to have a huge amount of fun over the next few years trying to work it all out," he told

reporters recently in Los Angeles, according to AP Radio. "I'm obviously busy for a couple of years on 'King Kong' so those lawyers can just go at it for a long time."

"The Hobbit" tells the story of Bilbo Baggins, who found the ring and eventually passes it on to his cousin, Frodo Baggins. Frodo's journey to Mount Doom to destroy the ring is the basis for the "Rings" books and films.

Jackson said if he were going to direct the movie, he'd want it to feel like the rest of the trilogy. On Sunday, Jackson won an Academy Award for best

director shared the adapted-screenplay award with his two co-writers for the final "Rings" film, "The Return of the King."

"I'd want Ian McKellen to be back as Gandalf, I'd want it to feel like it was part of the same mythology that we've done with 'Lord of the Rings,'" Jackson said.

"The Return of the King" swept this year's Academy Awards, winning all 11 categories in which it was nominated.

Jackson is in the middle of remaking "King Kong," due out next year, starring Naomi Watts.

Stern believes radio reign coming to end

NEW YORK (AP)—Shock jock and self-proclaimed "King of All Media" Howard Stern believes his reign on the radio is coming to an end. "The show is over," he announced Friday morning on his nationally syndicated radio program. "It's over."

It's not—at least not yet. But Stern predicted that a Federal Communications Communication crackdown on indecency on the airwaves will force his salacious show off the dial.

"I'm guessing that sometime next week will be my last show on this station," said Stern, adding that he expected the FCC to hit him with a whopping indecency fine. "There's a cultural war going on. The religious right is winning. We're losing."

A telephone call to Infinity Broadcasting, which syndicates Stern's show, was not returned Saturday to discuss Stern's comments.

On Friday, Stern devoted the first 2 1/2 hours of his show to his anticipated demise, a change of pace from the usual fare of naked women and toilet humor.

Clear Channel Communications yanked Stern from stations in San Diego, Pittsburgh, Rochester, N.Y., Louisville, Ky., and Fort Lauderdale and Orlando, Fla. on Feb. 25. The company said the suspension would last until the Stern show met its programming guidelines.

Vandross' mother aids diabetes campaign

NEW YORK (AP)—Diabetes contributed to the stroke of Luther Vandross and the deaths of his father, sister, brother and nephew.

So his mother, Mary Vandross, recently completed public service announcements in the hope that more people will become aware of the dangers of the disease.

"I feel very deeply that if anyone, any family member who has been diagnosed with diabetes is concerned, if they will only hear me and see what I have gone through and what I'm going through, and if it can help them in any way, then it's well worth my time," Mary Vandross told The Associated Press in a recent interview.

The mother of the R&B crooner says Vandross was able to control his diabetes when he lost weight. But he was overweight in the months before his April 2003 stroke.

"As long as he kept his weight down and did the exercising, he did just fine," she said. "The moment he put the weight back on, that's when all the trouble began."

Vandross' co-wrote the Grammy-winning song "Dance With My Father" for his late father.

Pastimes

WONDERWORD
By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

SLIPPERY WHEN WET

Solution: 6 letters

S	Y	R	E	H	T	I	L	S	D	E	W	J	P	B
E	S	A	E	R	G	I	M	N	R	E	G	N	A	D
R	S	A	L	T	Q	N	U	M	A	R	D	N	V	M
O	L	A	I	G	R	A	H	T	N	N	R	A	M	P
F	G	D	D	G	T	E	C	O	A	E	E	E	E	P
O	M	D	①	S	R	L	I	T	L	O	A	N	N	A
O	L	E	O	①	I	T	B	E	I	R	C	Y	T	I
T	I	R	P	M	①	S	A	L	E	O	T	I	U	N
I	F	I	A	D	O	⑤	L	D	U	F	N	C	M	T
N	R	T	N	A	E	S	A	I	A	N	R	I	B	C
G	E	O	K	N	L	V	N	R	D	E	D	N	L	S
S	C	E	T	I	E	L	C	O	A	E	L	E	E	P
R	D	E	S	K	A	T	E	M	W	E	A	S	R	O
T	L	O	O	S	E	D	E	W	I	N	E	S	S	T

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Banana, Blunder, Clean, Climate, Coating, Condition, Crafty, Cream, Damp, Danger, Dewiness, Evade, Film, Footing, Free, Frost, Glossy, Grass, Grease, Grip, Ground, Iciness, Imminent, Jam, Ladder, Liquid, Loose, Paint, Pavement, Peel, Ramp, Release, Roads, Roof, Salt, Silt, Skate, Skin, Slide, Slither, Smeared, Snow, Soaked, Spot, Traction, Tumble, Weather, Well.
Last Saturday's Answer: Nurture
NOTE: Postage and handling charges have changed for The Collector's Wonderword. Add \$3 for the first book ordered, \$1 more for each additional book. Volumes 17 and 18 are \$5.95 each; payable to Universal Press Syndicate. Send to WONDERWORD, 4320 Mar-St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free 1-800-255-4734, ext. 6813.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Needle case	1 Napo-
5 Turf	2 Mai —
8 "The Georgia Peach"	3 Ensigns' org.
12 Utter destruction	
14 Wheel-base terminus	
15 Gilbert & Sullivan's ship	
16 Broadway brightener	
17 Airborne Dracula	
18 Strut about	
20 Leading man in the theater?	
23 Action	
24 Earth	
25 "Tommy" contest	
28 Wieder-sehen preceder	
29 Composer Thomas, et al.	
30 LummoX	
32 Nitwit	
34 Crazy	
35 Apiece	

36 Skinflint	4 Actress Sanford	21 First course, often
37 Inspira-tion for Strauss	5 Glas-wegian	22 Stereo hookup
40 Frat party item	6 Bobby of hockey	23 Washing-ton or Shore
41 Monad	7 Dug more	25 Laws
42 Wind-driven toy	8 Where Thanks-giving is in	26 Take a gander
47 Initial chip	9 Yoked duo	27 Chantilly, for one
48 Re NY, NJ and CT, e.g.	10 Coalition	29 Obsessed seaman
49 Mad monarch of Brit lit	11 Part of N.B.	31 In support of
50 Prepared party	13 Some-where out there	33 Gender-less
	19 CSA soldiers	34 Aurora borealis, e.g.
	20 Dos Passos trilogy	36 Church array
		37 Two-way
		38 Bancroft or Boleyn
		39 Silents actress Naldi
		40 Heal, as a fracture
		43 Rage
		44 Corrode
		45 Greek vowel
		46 "The Amazing Race" segment

Solution time: 24 mins.

J	O	S	H	P	O	R	K	L	O	B	
A	N	N	A	R	H	E	A	I	V	E	
I	C	O	N	O	I	L	Y	E	A	T	
L	E	W	D	M	O	I	H	U	L	A	
				I	M	P	E	V	A		
P	L	A	N	E	T	F	I	N	I	T	E
M	I	G	H	T	C	D	R	O	M		
S	P	E	A	R	S	O	A	T	E	R	S
				N	O	T	F	R	O		
K	I	N	D	R	E	F	H	A	L	F	
O	D	E	J	I	V	E	A	W	O	L	
N	E	W	A	K	I	N	N	A	V	E	
G	A	T	W	E	L	D	D	Y	E	D	

Saturday's answer 2-23

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY
Howard Jones, Patricia Richardson, Johnny Winter, Peter Fonda

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: You will have the discipline, desire and the determination to make things happen this year. It will require organization, but your unusual approach to everything you do will drum up the support required to push forward. Your numbers are 11, 16, 20, 25, 34, 43

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Do a little extra research to get to the bottom of what's really going on today. It's up to you to make whatever adjustments are necessary. Don't get angry—get energetic. ☼☼



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Give extra attention to your home and the improvements you can make. Being affectionate toward your family will bring good results and the help you need to tidy up. ☼☼☼



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
Romance is in the picture today, so spend some time with the person who interests you the most. Agreements can be made, but get everything in writing to avoid problems in the future. ☼☼☼☼



CANCER (June 21-July 22)
Curb your mood swings before they lead to trouble. No one will want to listen to you nag, so vow to be positive — and, in return, get positive results. ☼☼



LEO (July 23-Aug.22)
Nothing can stop you once you set your course. Make whatever calls are crucial to getting what you want. Expanded interests equal greater possibilities. ☼☼☼☼☼



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
The more you do to compensate any negatives in your life, the better it will be for you in the future. Money may be tight if you haven't already set a strict budget. ☼☼☼



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
Your positive outlook and helpful nature will turn even the most ill-tempered person into someone who is willing to compromise. Partnerships can take a turn for the better, but only if you are willing to stroke your partner's ego. ☼☼☼



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
Work-related matters should be at the forefront of your mind today. Do all you can to get the projects you care the most about off the ground. Don't let others get wind of your ideas. ☼☼☼



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
Little self-improvements will help to raise your self-esteem as well as bring you some much-needed attention. Social events appear to be romantically promising. ☼☼☼☼☼



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
Don't stand for criticism that isn't valid. You must not let someone else's jealousy put a damper on your day or your progress. Don't waste your time reacting to negative action. ☼☼



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
You can make the plans and arrangements and be the hero if you put a little effort into the events that you feel friends and family will enjoy. Pleasure travel will result in making some new friends. ☼☼☼☼



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
You should be putting all of your time and effort into your career objectives. Don't feel bad if you haven't reached your goal. Continue to pursue your dreams. ☼☼☼

BIRTHDAY BABY: You are fidgety and always looking for something to occupy your time. You are interested in anything that is challenging and exciting. It's difficult for you to relax and do nothing.

(Need advice? Check out Eugenia on the Web at www.astroadvice.com or www.eugenialast.com.)



STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

Garfield

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Adam@home	The Duplex

Team Standings		
Group A		
SIP-Verizon	4	0
Bayani	2	2
SMF	2	2
CCA	2	2
MDX	0	4
Group B		
Visminda	4	1
Cabalen	4	1
Mobil-LIPS	4	1
Bicol	1	3
MIFICPA	1	3
Samahang Laguna	0	5



Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T
Yankees	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	1	7
Academy	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	2	1	8

SPORTS BRIEFS

Kwame Brown leads Wizards past Pacers



WASHINGTON (AP)—Kwame Brown had a career-high 25 points and nine rebounds Saturday as the Washington Wizards shot 63 percent in the first half and held on to beat the Indiana Pacers 107-96.

"It's coming together," said Brown, the top pick straight out of high school in the 2001 draft. "I'm a lot more comfortable. Not as jittery, taking my shots when I have it."

Brown made eight of 12 shots, nine of 10 free throws and had the better in a matchup against fellow straight-out-of-high-schoolers Jermaine O'Neal and Al Harrington. Brown, who has struggled for consistency over much of his career, is averaging 13 points and 7.8 rebounds over his last 11 games.

"Let's see some consistency," Washington coach Eddie Jordan said. "We're not going to gloat. We love what happened tonight. We're not going to say he's arrived, because it's all about consistency."

Steve Blake added a career-high 18 points for the Wizards, who never trailed and have won three of four.

Harrington scored 21 points for the Pacers, who were done in by poor outside shooting as they lost their second game in as many nights following a five-game winning streak. Indiana was 1-for-14 from 3-point range at one point in the fourth quarter and finished 5-for-22.

Warriors 105, Trail Blazers 87

In Portland, Oregon, Jason Richardson scored 31 points, including seven 3-pointers as Golden State beat Portland to end a 12-game road losing streak.

Erick Dampier added 20 rebounds and 18 points, and Speedy Claxton had 15 points, seven assists and five steals.

Zach Randolph had 23 points and seven rebounds for the Trail Blazers, while Rasheed Wallace added 13 points and nine rebounds.

Darius Miles played for the first time since being traded to the Trail



Blazers by Cleveland for guard Jeff McInnis and center Ruben Boumtje Boumtje. Miles scored 12 points in 20 minutes.

Heat 85, Knicks 77

In New York, Eddie Jones scored 26 points and added six assists as Miami handed New York its first loss at Madison Square Garden under coach Lenny Wilkens.

Lamar Odom had 19 points, nine rebounds and five assists, and Caron Butler scored 17 for the Heat as they avenged two lopsided losses to the Knicks earlier this season.

Michael Doleac scored 18 and Penny Hardaway 16 for the Knicks, whose reserves outscored their starters 39-38. Doleac and Hardaway each played 32 minutes while Keith Van Horn played 26 and Houston 23.

Cavaliers 95, 76ers 87

In Cleveland, Eric Williams scored 20 points, Dajuan Wagner added 17 and Cleveland finally slowed down Philadelphia star Allen Iverson in the fourth quarter.

Carlos Boozer had 15 points and 15 rebounds as the Cavs improved to 2-1 without rookie star LeBron James, who missed his third straight game with a sprained right ankle.

Iverson scored 32 points—21 in the third.

Glenn Robinson had 20 points for the injury-riddled Sixers, who have lost six of eight.

Hornets 98, Spurs 96

In San Antonio, Darrell Armstrong capped a season-high 35-point performance by hitting a 3-pointer from 9-meters (25 feet) with a second left to lead New Orleans to a come-from-behind victory over San Antonio.

Armstrong finished 11-for-21 from the field and was a perfect 9-for-9 from

Washington Wizards' Etan Thomas (36) scores on Indiana Pacers' Jermaine O'Neal, behind, during the first quarter Saturday, Jan. 24, 2004, in Washington. AP

the free throw line. He also nailed an 18-meter (53-foot) basket with a second left in the first half to close the Spurs' lead to 52-41.

The Spurs took an 18-point lead with five minutes left in the third, going up 69-51 after Tim Duncan dunked off an alley-oop pass from Manu Ginobili before New Orleans came back behind Armstrong.

Malik Rose led the Spurs with 20 points.

Lakers 93, Jazz 86

In Salt Lake City, Kobe Bryant returned from the injured list and scored 21 points to help the Los Angeles Lakers beat Utah to snap a nine-game road losing streak.

Bryant missed six games because of a sprained right shoulder. He felt good during the team shootaround earlier in the day and was activated.

Slava Medvedenko of the Ukraine tied his career high with 26 points for the Lakers, who let a 19-point lead slip to three twice before sealing their first road win since a 114-103 victory over Dallas on Dec. 4.

DeShawn Stevenson led Utah with 17 points.

SuperSonics 102, Clippers 97

In Seattle, Ray Allen scored 17 of his 41 points in the fourth quarter as Seattle took advantage of the Los Angeles Clippers' 4-for-19 3-point shooting.

The Sonics beat the Clippers for the third straight time this season, following two season-opening wins over Los Angeles in Japan in October.

Allen shot 14-for-23, including 6-for-10 from 3-point range, in finishing one point shy of his season best. Rashard Lewis, who had a career-high 50 points against the Clippers in the second game in Japan, added 15 points and Antonio Daniels came off the bench to score 14 for the Sonics.

The Clippers got 26 points and 16 rebounds from Elton Brand, 25 points and 10 rebounds from Maggette and 22 points from Quentin Richardson.

Mickelson, Triplett share Bob Hope lead

By KEN PETERS
AP SPORTS WRITER



LA QUINTA, Calif.

(AP)—Kirk Triplett shot a 9-under 63 Saturday, remaining bogey-free in the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic and tying Phil Mickelson for the lead at 26 under.

Triplett has 24 birdies, an eagle and 47 pars through 72 holes in the 90-hole tournament. Mickelson, making his 2004 debut, shot a 67 at Bermuda Dunes but still saw his two-shot lead evaporate. He won the Hope in 2002.

Kenny Perry, the 1995 champion, had consecutive eagles in his second 64 of the tournament and was one shot behind the co-leaders at 25-under 263.

Triplett who won the Reno-Tahoe Open last year for his second tour victory, holed a bunker shot for an eagle on No. 5 at Indian Wells Country Club, and made a twisting 20-foot birdie putt on No. 11 to highlight his fourth round.

John Daly had a rare double eagle on No. 2 at PGA West. Daly holed his second shot from 220 yards on the 514-

yard par 5. He finished the round with a 72 and was 15 under.

Jay Haas, the 1988 champion and runner-up to Mike Weir a year ago, was two shots off the pace after a 67.

Perry gained four strokes to par with his consecutive eagles on the par-5 fifth and sixth holes at La Quinta Country Club.

He hit a 4-iron that stopped 12 feet past the hole on the 516-yard No. 5 and drilled the putt.

He hit another fine approach, a 3-iron from 229 yards on the 527-yard sixth hole. He curved the ball to the right and around a bunker, and the ball rolled within 8 feet. He sank that putt to pick up four shots in two holes and go to 24 under at that point.

Perry acknowledged the applause from the gallery with a wave, and shook his head, grinning.

Five others, including 2000 winner Jesper Parnevik at 266, were within four shots of the leaders.

Mickelson, making his 2004 debut and looking for his first win in 18 months, was somewhat inconsistent during his fourth round - ranging from

a 40-foot birdie putt that he snaked into the hole to a drive into the water and a bogey on No. 10.

By comparison to Triplett's zero bogeys, Mickelson had four bogeys through the first 72 holes.

The first four rounds of the Hope are played as a pro-am on four courses, with the players alternating daily. The field was cut to the low-scoring 70 pros and ties for the final round at PGA West.

It took a 72-hole score of 277 - 11 under - or better to make the cut.

Scores traditionally are very low, with the desert courses relatively easy, and most of the par 5s reachable in two shots. Weir won at 30-under 330 last year, Mickelson also was 30 under a year earlier when he won a playoff with David Berganio Jr., and Joe Durant set a tour record for a 90-hole tournament with a 36-under 324 in 2001.

Phil Mickelson watches his drive from the 13th tee box Saturday, Jan. 24, 2004 at the Bermuda Dunes Country Club in Palm Desert, Calif., during the fourth round of the Bob Hope Chrysler tournament. AP



SPORTS BRIEFS

Table tennis singles tourney tomorrow

The Marianas Amateur Table Tennis Association is inviting the public to join the 2004 MATTA Open Singles Table Tennis Tournament.

The tournament will begin tomorrow and will continue throughout the rest of the month. It will be held Tuesday and Thursday nights at the multi-purpose room of the Gilbert C. Ada Ada Gymnasium.

The tournament format will be round-robin type of competition for the initial round where each participant will play all the other members of their division once.

Those who win the most games will move on to the elimination phase and playoffs.

Admission fee for the tournament will be \$10 per participant. Trophies will be presented to the winners of their respective divisions during an after-tournament dinner.

Children who wish to participate should inform their parents and ask for their consent. For more information please call Steve Lim at 483-7842.

21st Island Relay set for Dec. 28

Officials of the 21st Annual Christmas Island Relay announced that this year's 13.7-mile team event is set to take place during the early morning hours of December 28.

The starting point of the course will be at the Pacific Islands Club south parking lot. Participants will then head north and work their way to the finish line at the Last Command Post in Marpi.

Interested teams may register at the starting point of the race, which will be at the Pacific Islands Club south parking lot in San Antonio. Registration begins at 5:15am.

Each team, which consists of five members, must switch runners every mile. It is also required that each team has at least one female participant or a participant who is under the age of 16 or in the senior division. Prior to competing, all teams must pay a fee of \$25.

For more information about the 21st Annual Christmas Island Relay, please contact Elias Rangamar at 234-1001 or 1002.

Budweiser Cup on Jan. 12

Officials of the much-awaited Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands Budweiser Cup have decided to push back the kick of date of the 2003 island-wide men's basketball season to January 12 of next year.

So far, 10 teams have shown interest in participating in the league. Only eight, however, are confirmed to battle for the championship crown and the \$1,000 grand prize that goes along with it. Also at stake are the \$300 prize for the runner-up and the \$200 award for the second runner-up.

Each team interested in taking part in the season is required to pay an entrance fee of \$900 that must be payable to BANMI.

Aside from the prizes awarded to the top three finishers, other prizes may be claimed through a half-court shot competition and a three-point contest.

For more information, please contact Rangamar at 664-2500 or Abner Venus at 234-5911.

SPG Council launches logo contest

The South Pacific Games Council Executive Board has announced that it will be selecting a new logo for the SPG Council. The winning logo will be selected from designs submitted through the national sports federations represented on the Council.

The contest is open to everyone. The general public is invited to submit design proposals. The Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association will select one or more of the designs submitted to it, for transmission to the SPG Council.

All entries should be submitted to NMASA President Michael A. White. The selection of a new design will take place at the SPG Council assembly in Palau next year.

For further information, please contact White at telephone 234-6547.

Sequioco tops Tuesday pool

By MARK RABAGO
REPORTER



Boyet Sequioco put together another perfect run last Tuesday to win the Round Two 8-Ball Fun Tournament that evening at the pioneering sports bar.

The Olango, Zambales native triumphed three straight times after getting a bye in the opening round then turned back a courageous effort by Ike Celis to win the Tuesday 8-ball plum.

Sequioco first victimized Cherish Reyes in the second round before getting the better of Celis in the next round. He then slammed perennial pool winner Manny Mariano in the winners' bracket final to secure the first finals berth and the all-important twice-to-beat advantage.

Celis, for his part, had to work double time after being relegated to losers' bracket play by the crafty Sequioco.

The silver-haired Celis rebounded quickly and nicely by first beating Round Two owner Don Pangelinan. He then eliminated top lady player Rosemarie Moses-Arnold before moving on to the losers' bracket final opposite Mariano.

The outing against Mariano was where Celis truly shone, as the veteran pool player shocked the Filipino cue artist and



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left: Third place Manny Mariano, Round Two 8-Ball Fun Tournament champion Boyet Sequioco, and runner-up Ike Celis.

arranged a championship round meeting with third round conqueror Sequioco.

Unfortunately for Celis his sparkling run apparently ran out in the deciding match against Sequioco, allowing the Hafa Adai security guard to come away with the weekly pool title. He won a handsome trophy and the \$40 top prize for his efforts.

Celis settled for the \$25 runner-up purse, while Mariano took home the \$15 third place

prize. All three men also got souvenir caps from Pacific Trading Co.

Other billiard players that graced the Tuesday 8-ball competition were Gary Ridley, Lars and Palacios.

The Round Two 8-Ball Tournament is held every Tuesday starting at 8pm and has an entry fee of \$10.

Round Two also regularly hosts two other pool tournaments through the course

of the week. Its winner-take-all pool tournament is held every Sunday starting at 1pm and costs \$5 to join.

On Thursdays, Round Two holds the exciting Miller Lite Invitational 8-Ball Tournament starting at 8pm. Entry fee is \$15 on regular days but goes up to \$25 every last Thursday of the month.

For more information on Round Two's tournaments, please contact Don Pangelinan at 234-6930.

ROCBALL

From Page 28

WATTS, wrote that that the program, which features shows on different sports from around the world, would like to attain footage, pictures, and information of Rocball for airing.

Feger also confirmed that he will send a couple of videotapes, information about the history of the sport, rules, and several articles and news clippings to Chimienti.

Eurosport reaches over 95 million homes in 54 countries.

Also being attracted to the sport is Brian Meredith, an operation manager for CrackerJax, a sports-theme

amusement park in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Meredith stated in his letter to Feger that he is currently searching for ways to make their three volleyball courts useful, and was intrigued after coming across some information about Rocball while browsing through the Internet.

Meredith added that he is trying to modify the courts to Rocball standards and is working towards starting a Rocball league.

"I can't believe that nobody in America plays this sport," Meredith stated.

Last year, Feger scheduled a special match featuring 2001 and 2002 champions DX and Jammers, which was taped and

sent to the Fox Sports Show "You Gotta See This." Fox Sports Show's Associate Producer Eric Hopkins expressed his interest in the sport. Camera crews were set up at courtside and on the roof of the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

He also sent a couple of videotapes, written information, and graphics to the Rocball Federation of India.

In related news, the World Organized Rocball Inter-scholastic and Community League's 2004 season is set to get underway on January 12.

Teams will engage in several practice rounds prior to seeing battle in the preliminary rounds, which is expected to kick off just

a couple of weeks later.

All interested players are encouraged to begin organizing squads for the league, which unlike other sporting events, doesn't require an entrance fee.

All matches will be played at the Marianas High School Green Court. Should Mother Nature interrupt with wet showers, matches will be played at the school's gym.

Feger began organizing and writing about the sport while in Japan in 1979. After two years of experimenting, the sport finally progressed into a tournament in 1983.

For more information, please contact Feger at 664-3810 or 288-8722.

LOVE

From Page 28

on the next two holes, then easily reached the par-5 11th with a 5-iron to set up his fourth straight birdie.

"I had my pompoms out, cheering him on," Woods said. "I told him on the 10th tee I was two ahead. He said, 'How's that?' I told him I was getting a stroke a hole."

Love smiled when asked about Woods' comments.

"I didn't want to stick my hand in the cage and ask him if he wanted strokes," Love said.

Indeed, Love put seven shots between him and Woods over the first nine holes, and it left himself in great position to become the

first repeat winner of the Target World Challenge since Woods created it five years ago.

Love won in 2000 with a 64 in the final round.

It would be a great way to end his best season on tour. Love won four times, and no victory bigger than his final-round 64 at The Players Championship on a cold, windy day at Sawgrass.

While this tournament only counts in the bank - \$1.2 million of the \$5 million purse going to the winner - a victory would be meaningful coming against a 16-man field of high-ranked players and three of the four major champions.

Plus, Love has played the last two rounds with Woods, a

situation that in the past hasn't allowed him to play his best.

Love has worked all year to worry about only his own game. In fact, he was having dinner with friends Friday night when they told him to beat Woods.

"K.J. is the guy to beat right now," Love said. "People don't see it the way we do. You've got to beat the golf course."

Harrington missed a 3-foot par putt on the final hole for a 70 and was in third place at 211, six shots behind. Masters champion Mike Weir, who opened with a 75, had a 3-under 69 and was at 212.

Choi is making his first appearance in the final event of the year, and would like nothing

better to end his season with a victory - even though it doesn't count in the record books and won't get him back to Kapalua.

"It would be even better ... because of the field," Choi said.

Catching up to Love could require a great round, especially the way Love is playing. The calm, warmer conditions allowed the ball to travel farther and the power hitters to play more aggressively.

Love's only bogey came on a three-putt from 15 feet, when his eyes saw only the hole and not the speed of the putt; he ran it 8 feet by and missed the par putt.

"Other than that, I felt like I could make birdie on every hole," Love said. "And I almost did."

IT'S CABALEN

From Page 28

fouling out.

In the first game, the UFO All-Stars finally notched a win after beating Bicol Express-RNV Construction 53-44.

First Game

UFO All-Stars 53—Mendiola 20, Malasarte 13, Pardinan 10, Gatdula 6, Canedo 4.

Bicol-RNV Construction 44—Jugos 15, Aldan 10, Abadilla 6,

Lopez 6, Miday 5, Mumar 2.

Second Game

Cabalen-RP Construction 121—Mendoza 25, Delos Reyes 35, Ocampo 13, Alipio 12, Arnedo 12, Jo. Gatdula 6, Magcalas 5, Sinca 3, Barbo 2.

SIP-Verizon 103—R. Alegre 19, Mendoza 18, Guiab 14, Factor 13, Rapanut 13, Villacrusis 9, T. Alegre 7, Tamondong 5, Flores 3, Garcia 2.

Scoring by quarters: 24-27, 59-50, 90-79, 121-103.



Trail Blazers defeat the Lakers, 112-108

Damon Stoudamire hit two 3-pointers in the final minutes and the Portland Trail Blazers handed the Los Angeles Lakers their second loss in two nights with a 112-108 victory Saturday night.

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Saipan Tribune Sports

Sequioco tops Tuesday pool

Boyet Sequioco put together another perfect run last Tuesday to win the Round Two 8-Ball Fun Tournament that evening at the pioneering sports bar.

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28 MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2003

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

It's Cabalen against Visminda

By MARK RABAGO
REPORTER

RP Construction dethrones SIP, 121-103

Cabalen-RP Construction reaffirmed their mastery over SIP-Verizon dethroning the three-time defending champion with a 121-103 rout Sunday night that secured them a finals ticket opposite Visminda-Country House in the 2003 UFO Miller Lite Cup championship.

The Transamerica-backed squad atoned for a shaky start, which had them trail SIP-Verizon 27-24 after the opening quarter, with a terrific second quarter.

Big man Ronald Delos Reyes, the goat in Cabalen's 103-108 loss to Visminda last week, came back strong and hit a couple of triples in the second stanza to start the fireworks for Cabalen.

Youthful center Ryan Mendoza, meanwhile, complemented Delos Reyes' sharpshooting ways by scoring 12 points from point blank range also in the second quarter.

The combination of efficient outside shooting and strong inside play translated to a 59-50 halftime advantage for Cabalen.

SIP-Verizon, whose players

came in late due to a mix-up in scheduling, continued to take on water and struggled mightily in the second half.

Cabalen's aggressive game had their opponents on the defensive during the early part of the third period. Another 3-pointer by Delos Reyes at the 8:03 mark of the quarter gave Cabalen its biggest lead so far at 68-54.

A few plays later, Mendoza struck again on the inside to pad their edge further at 72-54 with 6:47 remaining in the period.

Following a putback by Delos Reyes on a miss free throw off a 3-point opportunity by Mendoza, the score stood at 89-68 with less than two minutes left in the third.

But SIP-Verizon was far from gone and retaliated with an 11-3 burst to close the quarter that cut their deficit to 90-79.

Cabalen's Mendoza also chipped in to SIP-Verizon's cause, inadvertently making a layup on SIP-Verizon's basket after an inbound play following a timeout with 31 ticks to go.

The big end-game rally, however, didn't materialize for SIP-Verizon as Cabalen

thwarted all attempts at an uprising and maintained their healthy lead all throughout the final quarter.

There were still a lot of scary moments though. With Cabalen up 96-84, SIP-Verizon forward Gary Rapanut missed a routine layup that could've cut the lead to 10 points.

At the 5:31 mark of the game Edsel Mendoza missed two tries from the free throw line and in the succeeding SIP-Verizon offensive, newly arrived Leo Factor missed the bonus free throw on a 3-point play that could've slashed Cabalen's lead again to 10 points.

With SIP-Verizon still within striking distance swingman Junar Guiab was hit with his fifth personal foul with 4:05 to go. Shortly after Factor followed him to the showers.

Playing-coach Rick Alegre's coast-to-coast layup made it 108-97 with 2:52 left in the game but that appeared to be SIP-Verizon's last gasp as Cabalen went on a 9-2 tear highlighted by an off-balanced 3-point play

by Randy Arnedo that, for all intents and purpose, sealed the game at 117-99 with 1:33 remaining.

Mendoza earned Miller Lite MVP of the Game honors after scoring

35 points, which was the same output submitted by Delos Reyes. Veterans Alex Ocampo, Jun Alipio added 13 and 12 points, respectively.

Rick Alegre topscored for SIP-Verizon with 19 points. Edsel Mendoza chipped in 16 points and Guiab 14 before

See IT'S CABALEN on Page 27



Rocball gains interest yet again

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER



Saipan's very own sport, Rocball, is steadily gaining more interest from the outside world.

This was learned late last week after founder and organizer James Feger announced that he has received e-mails from a couple organizations, Eurosport TV and a sports amusement park in Arizona, interested in gaining more information about the sport.

Eurosport, the most widely available sports channel in Europe, has made contact with Feger and has shown interest in learning more about the sport for future broadcasting.

In an e-mail letter to Feger, Pablo Chimienti of Eurosport's weekly program

See ROCBALL on Page 27

Love pulls away from Tiger at Sherwood

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP GOLF WRITER



THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP)—Davis Love III made four straight birdies to leave Tiger Woods in the dust and pull away from a world-class field Saturday, finishing with a 9-under 63 to build a three-shot lead in the Target World Challenge.

Despite a bogey on the par-3 17th, Love tied the tournament record set last year by Pádraig Harrington in the third round. Harrington built a record six-shot lead and hung on to win against Woods.

Love, at 11-under 205, only had a three-shot margin over K.J. Choi (65), although he won't have to worry about Woods.

As most of the leaders were posting birdies on a sunny, benign afternoon at Sherwood, the tournament host gave up ground with a three-putt bogey



Tiger Woods reacts to his approach shot on the 18th hole during the third round of the Target World Challenge, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2003, in Thousand Oaks, Calif.

on No. 3 and then hit his tee shot into the water for a bogey on the next hole.

Woods lost all hope on the final hole, hitting off the pine

straw and coming up well short, into the water, and he had to make a 15-footer for bogey. He had a 72 and was nine shots back at 214.

Meanwhile, Love played some of his best golf since early in the year. "I was confident all day," Love said. "I'm getting more and more comfortable playing with Tiger and around the lead."

Love was tied with Choi and Justin Leonard when his 4-iron on the difficult par-3 8th climbed just enough to hop into the fringe and stop about 6 feet above the hole for one of only two birdies in the round.

Love holed putts of 20 feet and 15 feet for birdies

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